

How to Have a Quiet Time

“Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4

“But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.” 2 Peter 3:18

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Matthew 6:21

INTRODUCTION

Devoting ourselves to one-on-one time with God in Bible study and prayer every day, I believe, is the single most important thing we Christians can do to enjoy a close, satisfying and thriving relationship with God that moves us to love Him more and to love others as He loves them. It allows us to be a display of His character to the world around us, which means that others see God in us and are drawn to the light and peace that we have from Him. Neglecting this one-on-one time can cause us to live life in the flesh rather than in the Spirit, drawing from our own strength which was never intended for us to do because we have a heavenly Father who wants to fill us with His love and power. This kind of life fails to draw people to Christ because we're seen as no different from those who do not know Christ.

While it's vitally important to be part of a Christ-centered church where the Word is taught, corporate worship is offered and fellowship among God's children is enjoyed, we simply cannot get all of our spiritual nourishment from a Bible study class and sermon on Sunday morning. Corporate worship should be the pinnacle of our week of growing in our individual relationship, a time when we get together with other believers who have also communed with God individually and we celebrate and worship Him together.

Please understand that I'm not at all minimizing the spiritual growth that's available from hearing a good sermon and a Bible lesson. However, I'm convinced that what we learn the other six days of the week through our individual study of the Word and the Holy Spirit's revealing God's truth to us on a very personal level is crucial to walking closely with God. Let's look at some important facets of this personal time with God.

WHAT IS A QUIET TIME?

The term “quiet time” can have many different connotations, so let me establish what it means to me. First of all, I must say that it is the most important part of my day because it's the way I “dress my heart and soul” in preparation for the day. I normally have my quiet time before I get dressed for the day because I know that unless my heart and soul are “dressed” and prepared for the day, it doesn't really matter what I look like on the outside. You see, I know what my flesh is like, I've seen it in action, and the only way to combat it is by preparing my heart, soul and mind with truths from God's Word.

Consequently, my quiet time is when I get alone with God away from the distractions of life so I can focus on hearing and learning from Him. It's a time when I ask Him to pour into me His wisdom and His plan for me for the day. We can ask God to show us a long-term plan, but sometimes we're not ready yet for the long-term plan. He simply wants us to walk with Him one day at a time, being obedient to His commands for that day.

A FEW BENEFITS OF A QUIET TIME

1. You will be strengthened by God. Ephesians 6:10 says, "Finally, be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength." (CSB)

Though our walk is not guaranteed to be an easy one, it can be made much less stressful and more fulfilling if we take heed to these words. Your morning quiet time is a great opportunity to allow God to strengthen you for whatever battle you will face. While other translations say, "Be strong in the Lord," the HCSB (CSB) translation says "Be strengthened by the Lord," which indicates that it is not something that we can do, but instead, something that we allow God to do in us.

2. You will learn to walk with God. Genesis 6:9 says, "...Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God."

Noah was different from everyone else of his time and was used powerfully by God to save his family from destruction, but that didn't come without his knowing God at a level greater than anyone else. Think about those words: "Noah walked with God." Would you like it to be said of you that you walk with God? The key to walking with God is spending time in His Word and in prayer, then incorporating His instruction into your daily life—in other words, delighting in and obeying God.

Here's one more verse about walking with God: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8

3. You will be clothed in the full armor of God so you will be prepared for whatever battle your day brings. Ephesians 6:11 says, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

This alone time with God is a great way to allow God to dress you with His armor of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and His Word.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HAVE A QUIET TIME?

Every day. Spending time with God gives us spiritual nourishment just as food gives us physical nourishment. Think about how weak you get physically when you go without food. The same thing happens to us spiritually when we go without spiritual nourishment that comes from spending one-on-one time with God.

“Yet **they seek Me daily** and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake the judgment of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments; they delight to draw near to God.” Isaiah 58:2 (Emphasis added)

During this particular season of their history, God’s children sought Him daily, delighting to know His ways, and they lived righteously as they took delight in approaching Him. Wouldn’t you love the same thing to be said of you? This benefit, living righteously and being a delight to God, prepares us to be useful to God and impact the world around us for His glory. After all, we owe everything to Him because of the gift of His only Son who gives us eternal life with Him and because of all He does for us as we walk this life on earth.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME FOR A QUIET TIME?

There are varying opinions on this question. My preference is first thing in the morning, as I’ve described earlier. That’s when my mind is fresh, my phone is not yet ringing and, most importantly, it’s before I’ve started to tackle whatever I have on my plate for the day. I look at it like a soldier reporting for duty to get his commands for the day from his superior. The difference here is that God, as our superior, loves us like no one else and He holds the plan for our lives, so why wouldn’t we seek Him for our daily marching orders?

Below are a few passages that provide another reason that I prefer to have my quiet time in the morning:

Psalm 5:3: “O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.” Our sacrifice is described in Romans 12:1, which says “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

Mark 1:35: “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”

There are other examples from scripture of Jesus going out very early in the morning to pray. With that said, though, if you’re not a morning person and you absolutely will not have a quiet time in the morning, then pick the time that works best for you. My brother likes to have his at night just before he goes to bed. That works better for some people.

Before we leave this topic, let me point out that most Christians who do not have a quiet time would probably say they would like to, but they’re simply not finding the time for it. They wake up just in time to get ready for work or school and race out the door, then at night they crash into bed from exhaustion. To that, I would respond that we make time for things that are important to us. Years ago, we were really busy subcontracting the building of our home in Georgia and I was home schooling our children who were in the 7th and 9th grades. Our pastor, one Sunday night, mentioned that a Bible study teacher had said that he asked God to wake him up in the mornings so that he would have time to spend with Him in Bible study and prayer time and God answered His prayer by doing that. That night as I was about to go to sleep, I thought about that and about how my time with God had not

been as vibrant as it had been in the past because I was not giving Him the time in the mornings that I had before. So before I went to sleep that night, I asked God to awaken me the next morning whenever He wanted to so I could spend time with Him. Well, the next morning at around 4:00 or 4:30, I woke up and not just awake as I normally would be, but wide awake! I knew that the GOD of the universe had awoken me so I could spend time with Him. He wanted to spend time with me! What a tremendous feeling when you think about that! I thanked Him for waking me up and acknowledged with a smile that He knew we had some time to make up. I encourage you to ask God to awaken you if you struggle with waking up early enough to spend time with Him. This relationship is just too important to forsake!

SO WHAT DOES A QUIET TIME LOOK LIKE?

My quiet time includes a beginning prayer to prepare my heart, a time of Bible study to learn what God thinks and values, and an ending prayer that includes praying through my mission statement, asking for His guidance through the day, praying for my family and anyone else God puts on my heart. This prayer also includes just being silent so I can listen to Him. After all, my quiet time is a conversation with God and no conversation should be one sided.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Obviously a Bible is necessary, but you also need a method for recording notes. This may be a notebook and a pen or a computer or tablet or simply a phone with a UVersion app of the Bible and the capability for writing notes on it. I use this many times because I feel my notes are stored better on here than in a notebook that I could lose. The main thing is that you make notes and use whatever format is easiest for you. My notes from my study of the Christmas story years ago became the published Bible study, *Changed by Christmas*.

One other thing you may want to have with you for your quiet time is a stack of note cards. There have been many times that God put someone on my heart during this time and when I finished my quiet time, I wrote him or her a note of encouragement or thanks.

WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE FOR A QUIET TIME?

Find a comfortable place where you are away from distraction. It may be a comfortable chair or it may be at a desk; wherever it is, you need to be able to make notes as you study. I have mine at a chair and ottoman next to our bed. I can relax and read or I can use the ottoman as my desk when I want to record my notes. Experiment until you find what works best for you.

WHAT IS THE BEST FORMAT FOR A QUIET TIME?

Following is the format that I use. I'm sure you can talk with others whose formats differ somewhat from this, but you will be able to develop your own format as you see what works best for you.

Beginning prayer

This prayer begins with praise and thanksgiving, acknowledging God for who He is and thanking Him for all He has done for me. Then I ask Him to prepare my heart to hear from Him, to be open to whatever He wants to say to me and I also include this request: "Make my heart the fertile soil that accepts your seed of truth and grow that seed into the magnificent fruit that only You can grow." One more important request I make is that God use this time to clothe me in His full armor—the breastplate of righteousness to fill my heart with His character, the belt of truth to know His will and His way, my feet prepared to walk in peace with Him, one hand holding the shield of faith to protect me from the darts of the evil one, the other hand holding the sword of the Spirit (His Word) and finally the helmet of salvation to make me continually aware that I am His.

Bible study

The most important thing I would like for you to understand concerning your personal Bible study is this: You don't have to study a whole chapter or book of the Bible every day. Some days you may read one verse and God opens it up to you with such insight and application that you just let that one verse sink in and you focus on it for the day. I think many people neglect studying the Word because they're intimidated by it and think they should have this huge arsenal of verses memorized or know every detail of Bible history, so they feel inadequate and throw up their hands and miss out on what God wants to teach them. Please don't get caught in that trap. The Bible is God's love letter and instruction book for you. He wants you to understand it and His Holy Spirit will help you if you will only open it and seek Him through it.

Two options for studying God's Word are (1) going through a good Bible study book or (2) simply studying the Bible on your own. I think it's preferable to do both, to mix it up. If I were to choose one method, though, I would have to say I prefer studying the Bible on my own. However, I do have some Bible study authors from whom I have learned much. It's probably a little easier to start with a Bible study book, so I'll discuss that method first.

Bible study book - There are millions of good Bible studies you can go through, but I would suggest asking your pastor or a Bible teacher at your church for suggestions. You'll want to be sure that the author is theologically sound, so asking will help you with that. Then as you go through the study, make sure to measure the truths being taught by their Biblical accuracy. Does it line up with Scripture? Is it leading me to trust God and Him alone? Is it leading me to follow God? Make sure the study leads you to apply what you've learned to your daily life. At the end of your study each day, find a passage of Scripture you've studied and determine to meditate on it throughout the day and to apply it to any situation in which you find yourself. (I have to throw in this plug, so please bear with me. God gave me a twenty-one-day Christmas Bible study called *Changed by Christmas* that I had published in August, 2019, and it's designed to go through during your quiet time between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The goal is to help us keep our minds on the reason for the season being the celebration of Jesus' birth and how the details even of His birth apply to our lives.)

The Bible as your study – Ask God to direct you to a portion of His Word as your focus of study for a time. For example, you may decide to study through a certain book of the Bible or you may decide to study a topic from various passages in the Bible. I would suggest starting out by studying a book of the Bible. While every book of the Bible is filled with great words and useful instruction, some are a little easier to understand and apply than others. One of my favorite books is John because the gospel is so clear and I love reading the words of Jesus. Of course, all of the Bible is full of His words, as well. Another favorite book is James because it's filled with such rich wisdom for everyday life. With that said, know that there is value to be found in studying any book of the Bible. Pray for God's direction and allow Him to lead you to one in particular. Once you've decided which book to study, begin reading it and pay attention to the audience being addressed. Read a few verses and pause, reflecting on the message. In your notes, answer these questions:

1. Who is the audience being addressed?
2. What words particularly catch my attention and what do they mean? If there is a particular word that catches your attention and you want to see more about it and what it means, do a search for other occurrences of the word. Look at those passages and make a note of the meaning.
3. What is the message?
4. How does the message apply to my life? In other words, what does God want me to do with the message?

As mentioned earlier, don't worry about trying to get through a certain prescribed number of verses. Take your time and allow God to speak to you through His Word; you may only cover one verse before God opens it up to you in a fresh, new way and applies it to your life.

There are many Bible commentaries you can use to help you understand the meaning of scripture. However, I believe the best commentary is the Bible itself and it is the used as my first research. I love to dig into a passage and search other similar passages or words to get a better understanding of what is being taught. The Bible is full of examples of its truths. With that being said, though, feel free to use a commentary that you know is theologically sound to help you grasp the truths and know how to apply them.

After you conclude your study, select a portion from the passage and commit it to memory so you can meditate on it throughout the day. Write this on a card if you need help remembering it and carry it with you throughout the day. You could put it on the dash of your car or in the front of your wallet, any place where you would see it. You could also put it on a note on your phone for easy reference.

Closing Prayer

Ask God to remind you throughout the day of the words from the passage you studied and to apply them to your life however He sees fit. Ask Him to help you live in a way that's pleasing to Him, a way that brings a smile to His face. Intercede for those in your circle as needed. Ask God to show you opportunities to share Him throughout the day and to give

you courage to do that. I normally pray through my mission statement before concluding my prayer because it puts the purpose I feel God has for me in front of me as I begin the day. Then before concluding your prayer time, be silent for a few minutes at least and allow God time to speak to you. Listen for that still small voice. It may come in the form of encouragement or conviction, maybe guidance in a particular issue. Don't force this, just be open to hear from God. He usually speaks most clearly to me through my study of His Word, but there are times when I've listened at the end of my prayer time and have received a calm assurance or encouragement from Him.

There are about as many options for your prayer time as there are people who pray, but let me point out one common outline for this prayer time. It's called ACTS and the letters stand for adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. First, you open with adoration or praise to God for who He is and all He has done. Then you move to confession of sins and repentance. Be sure to never look at your sins flippantly because God certainly doesn't. This is a good time to remember the words of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 5:3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." When we humble ourselves before God in confession and repentance, we are able to experience His love and grace far more than we ever will from an attitude of arrogance. Next, thank God for particular blessings He has poured on your life, including even the trials from which you have grown to know Him better. Last is supplication where you appeal to God for meeting needs you have, as well as needs those around you have.

These are some ideas for your prayer time, but allow God to lead you in your time with Him as He desires and in a way that causes you to better know Him and His ways.

One more thing...a sweet offering of praise to God

I believe the best way to conclude our quiet time is with a song of praise to God. I've created a playlist of praise songs on my phone and I love picking out one to sing along with. It's such a sweet, sweet time of praising God for His great love and grace, for His unending mercies.

I pray this has helped you in either enriching your quiet time or starting the practice of having a quiet time. Feel free to email me your thoughts or questions at sherry@sherrymyers.com.

(All Scripture passages, unless otherwise noted, are from the ESV translation of the Bible.)