

TIME ALONE WITH GOD

Quiet time with God—to hear Him speak through His Word and to speak to Him in prayer—can become the pivotal point of your day.

by Kathy Irey

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The joy of any one-to-one relationship is the time that you and that other person share alone. It's not what you might hear about the other person, or the time that you and he (or she) get to spend together with others present. No, the true basis of any relationship with another person is the time you spend alone with that person.

Shared one-to-one time, then, it seems to me, is a primary reason to have a Daily Quiet Time with God. Each of God's children needs personal time with Him.

Any number of Bible verses will support this. Hebrews 4:16 tells us to "approach the throne of grace with confidence . . . to help us in our time of need." Psalm 46:10 admonishes us to "Be still, and know that I am God." Daniel 6:10 makes it clear that the prophet and dream-interpreter Daniel consistently shared time alone with God.

As Mark 1:35 would suggest, even Jesus found it useful and necessary to have a Daily Quiet Time: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

Considering His previous day's activities (Mark 1:21-34), you would have to think that Jesus was very tired. It must have been tempting to sleep in a bit. But, instead, He decided that meeting with His Father was much more important.

Martin Luther followed this example. Luther's morning Quiet Times typically lasted an hour. Faced with an especially hard day, he would double this time. (I suggest beginning with 10 minutes and building to half an hour.)

Luther, intimately familiar with the Scriptures, knew well the importance the Bible placed on regular study, prayer and meditation.

Second Timothy 3:16-17, for example, tells us that regular study of the Word is useful for "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training" us for righteousness, making us "thoroughly equipped" to handle life.

A Daily Quiet Time should be a time of cleansing, of "spiritual purification" (1 John 1:9). Our first utterance as we enter the Lord's presence should be confessing our sins and seeking forgiveness. This is important, because without that forgiveness, the Lord, in a sense, will not hear us ("If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened"—Ps. 66:18).

Without a Daily Quiet Time, we dilute our preparation to fight the world and live the Christian life.

Time alone with God seems to me to be a basic need of every Christian (and something that our heavenly Father must truly desire for us). Yet, many of us fail to do it. Why? Probably because “the spirit is willing, but the body is weak” (Matt. 26:41). (It’s telling to note, in light of the subject matter of this story, that what prompted Jesus to utter this line was His disciples’ inability to “keep watch with me for just one hour.”)

How do we overcome such human weakness and have a consistent Quiet Time with God?

First of all, our time with the Lord needs to become our top priority. Our Quiet Time should be the pivotal point of our days.

By establishing a set time (early morning, after work, bedtime), we incorporate our Quiet Time into our daily routine. Still, while this is useful, we need to stay flexible to accommodate schedule changes. Reserving structured time for God is what’s important, even if that time floats from day to day.

One intruder certain to be present, no matter what time you approach the throne, is Satan. Beginning your Quiet Time by rebuking him, asking the Lord to keep him from you, generally eliminates this problem. This can be followed by Scripture reading.

Any legitimate translation of the Bible can be used. Some people use more than one. In choosing, you need to find one that you understand—that seems to speak personally to you.

Devotional material can help in your study. Many excellent devotionals are available. These are particularly helpful to children and to adults who are new to having a Daily Quiet Time. Reading through a book of the Bible can also be meaningful. Additionally, you can match up verses on the same topic, research a spiritual question, or delve deeper into a subject you’ve heard taught or preached.

Writing in your Bible is a good way of personalizing the Word as you study it. Each time you open your Bible and see an underlined, starred or circled verse, it reminds you of what the Lord taught you in a previous meeting. Noting in the margin what kind of verse it is—a command, promise, prophecy, warning, etc—can further illuminate your understanding.

The same is true when you write the verse’s topic beside it: prayer, faith, healing, love, salvation, etc. By also writing the date beside these verses, you can develop a faith-building journal of sorts in the margins of your Bible.

Supplementing your Bible reading with other books, or reviewing notes from Bible classes, allows the ideas of others to speak to you.

This time of study flows naturally into prayer, in which we talk to God. The importance of this phase of your Daily Quiet Time is self-evident.

And there is a third key component, besides Bible reading and prayer, to these daily sessions: praise and worship.

For a reminder of just how appropriate music and singing can be in our praise and worship, see Psalm 150 (and many other psalms, for that matter!). Singing personalizes your worship. It facilitates your lifting praises to God's throne.

However, you should not become discouraged if every Quiet Time is not a deeply spiritual experience. Everyone has dry days.

Making yourself available to the Lord is your responsibility. The rest is up to Him. This is His time. And He will use it to share His love with you.

"I love the Lord, because He has heard my voice and my supplications. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I breathe" (Ps. 116:1-2).

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