

## GOD DEEMS QUIET TIMES AN ESSENTIAL BUSINESS!

Quiet times. Devotions. Time with the Lord. *Whatever you want to call it, we need it!* I'm not exaggerating when I say that your quiet time is the one of the most important disciplines you can practice in your Christian life. At its essence, a quiet time is the private time you spend with your Savior, talking with Him in prayer, and hearing from Him through His Word. The time you spend with the Lord each day is *essential* to your spiritual health and growth. Verse after verse in the Bible attests that believers will always seek to spend time with their Lord whom they love. God's children pour over His Word because it is *His* and *He wrote it for us* so that we would learn more about Him and His will for our lives.

Babies long for milk. It's the most *natural* thing in the world for babies to drink the special nourishment God provided for them in their mother's milk. Peter tells us the same is true for believers. In fact, we are commanded to long for the pure milk of the Word, just like those newborn babies do, so we may grow in our salvation (1 Peter 2:2). When we are born again and new believers in Christ, the Lord actually gives us a hunger for His Word. Yet, unlike babies who eventually outgrow their need for their mother's milk, believers never outgrow their need for the Word of God. We must feed on it daily for continued strength and health. This is just as true for young believers as it is for mature ones. *No Christian can maintain spiritual health and vitality or grow in grace, knowledge, and understanding if they omit time with the Lord. It is not even possible.*

J. C. Ryle said, "The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit, is 'the chief means by which men are built up and strengthened in the faith,' after their conversion. It is able to make them pure, to sanctify them, to train them in righteousness, and to thoroughly equip them for every good work (Psalm 119:9; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Spirit ordinarily does these things by the written Word; sometimes by the Word read, and sometimes by the Word preached, but seldom, if ever, without the Word." (Ryle, J.C. (2010-08-06). *Practical Religion*. Kindle Locations 1774-1777.)

Yet, for all its importance to our lives, spending time with the Lord on a daily basis often gets misplaced, misspent, misappropriated—missed. Quiet times don't have to be fancy, super detailed, or require extra books or training. All you need for your quiet time is your Bible ready for you to read, a heart ready to talk with the Lord, and some time to make it happen.

*Why add another thing to an already busy day?*

In a nutshell, a quiet time is a reflection of the love we have for the Lord Jesus. We always spend time with the people we love and enjoy. We always find time to do the things we value. We may not know much about the Bible, but we will always want to draw near to the Lord in some way. Establishing a daily time with Him, learning about Him and His will for us in His Word, changes us. Are you struggling to overcome sin? Spend time in the Word. Do you feel you've lost your zeal for the Lord? Spend time in the Word. Do you long to love the Lord better? Spend time in the Word. The Scriptures contain everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:2-11).

*Often in my pastoral ministry, I have asked people with serious problems, 'Tell me about your devotional life.' The usual response has been an embarrassed look, a bowed head, and the quiet confession, 'I stopped reading my Bible and praying a long time ago.' And they wondered why they had problems! (Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*)*

*What is a quiet time?*

I don't think there is a hard and fast definition out there for what a quiet time is. When I was a brand-new believer, one of my friends told me that I needed to spend time with the Lord every day, reading the Bible and praying. So that's what I did. That's what I still do. And by the Lord's grace, it's what I will continue to do until the day that I am in His presence. Generally, a quiet time is a special time in your day that you've set aside to hear from the Lord through His Word and talk with Him about your concerns and needs in prayer.

*When should I have a quiet time?*

There's nothing in the Scriptures that indicate when you should spend time with the Lord. We are simply commanded to do so. It's also expected that we would want to spend time with the Lord as well. Yet, over the years I have found that most people spend time with the Lord in the morning—even the night owls.

*How long should my quiet time be?*

Again, nothing in the Scriptures indicates just how long your quiet time should be. Your quiet time needs to be long enough that you can read a chunk of Scripture and even pray about it. If you are just learning to read your Bible and spend time with the Lord, try spending 5-10 minutes with the Lord by reading His Word and praying about what you read. Generally, you want to spend enough time that you can read the Bible and pray. The goal isn't to meet a certain time quota, the goal is to spend time with your Lord and Savior.

*How can I learn to be more consistent with my quiet time?*

That is a great question! As I mentioned earlier, we almost always make time for the things we love and value the most. If you desire to spend time with the Lord, you will keep after it until you get time with Him. I think moms with young ones probably have the hardest time in being consistent with their quiet times. They are usually running on sleep fumes and even when they do get up before the kiddos, that doesn't mean they will have uninterrupted time. I used to think there was a string attached to Bible to the kiddos' toes or something. It always seemed that as soon as I nestled down to spend time with the Lord, then someone would get up and need attention. I did end up teaching them how to sit quietly and read their own Bibles while I read mine. It's important for children to see you reading the Bible and making time to be with the Lord. Basically, building a consistency in your daily quiet times takes practice, commitment, planning, and preparation—just like everything else that we want to undertake.

*What are some ideas for a quiet time?*

Quiet times should have two main things in them—time in the Word of God and time in prayer. With those two elements in place, you can be as creative as you want. I start out my time reading the Bible by using a Bible reading plan. Find one that sounds good to you and give it a try. Every few years I choose a different Bible reading plan, just to mix things up a bit. Boredom is a no-no when it comes to quiet times! My favorite Bible reading plan combines portions of the Old Testament and New Testament along with Psalms and Proverbs. I like reading through the Bible in a year every year so I can be reminded of all the parts of God’s Word and grow more familiar with it. It also protects me from just reading “the good parts” or the parts that are the most encouraging to me. “*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*”

I also love listening to the Bible (and different Bible apps do this really well), like when I’m getting done in the morning or when I’m working in the kitchen. *Listening* to the Scriptures being read is more of a supplement to my quiet time. For me, it’s just *another* way to spend time with the Lord and think on Him. However, listening to the Bible *and* following along in your Bible combines two different learning styles that can be really effective in sowing the Word in your heart.

When I was more pressed for time, like when our kids were all still at home, then I would sometimes use my quiet time to do my Bible study lesson or write a study. The key is to make sure that doing the lesson doesn’t become a task, but a means to spend time with the Lord as you study His Word. I thoroughly enjoy studying and writing. It’s a super encouraging and rich time for me, but I find I still prefer to have another separate reading and prayer time. Your quiet time can look different than mine. But all quiet times will contain the same elements—a desire to spend time with the Lord, a reading of the Scriptures, and time in prayer. You can journal, sing, do a lesson, read a devotional with the goal of enriching and deepening your time with the Lord.

If you are bored with your quiet time, then try something else. Pray and ask the Lord to help you. I can guarantee that if you are spending time reading and then thinking on and praying about what you’ve read, your quiet time won’t be a drudgery. One of the things I try to keep in mind for my quiet time is that this is my time to meet with the Lord. I ask Him to build in me anticipation and eagerness to spend time with Him. I want to have the attitude that Jesus is waiting to meet with me if only I’ll get out of bed and come be with Him.

*Listen to what these believers have to say about having a quiet time:*

“I earnestly recommend that it be in the early morning, unless there are some extenuating circumstances. Entering the day without a serious meeting with God, over His word and in prayer, is like entering the battle without tending to your weapons. The human heart does not replenish itself with sleep. The body does, but not the heart... We replenish our hearts not with sleep, but with the Word of God and prayer.” ~John Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God*

“A private relationship of worshiping God is the greatest essential element of spiritual fitness.... You may be saying, ‘But I can’t be expected to live a sanctified life in my present circumstances; I have no time for prayer or Bible study right now; besides, my opportunity for battle hasn’t come yet, but when it does, of course I will be ready?’ No, you will not. If you have not been worshiping in everyday occasions, when you get involved in God’s work, you will not only be useless yourself but a hindrance to those around you. God’s training ground...is in the hidden, worshiping life of the saint.” ~Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*

“I feel it is far better to begin with God—to see His face first, to get my soul near Him before it is near another.” ~Robert Murray McCheyne

“What is the best safeguard against false doctrine? The Bible regularly read, regularly prayed over, regularly studied.” ~J.C. Ryle

“If God is a reality, and the soul is a reality, and you are an immortal being, what are you doing with your Bible shut?” -Herrick Johnson

“Do you know a book that you are willing to put under your head for a pillow when you lie dying? Very well; that is the book you want to study while you are living. There is but one such book in the world.” -Joseph Cook

*Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law.* Psalm 119:18