

How To Have A Quiet Time

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We don't have a lot of time before we pray today but I want to share a brief message with us about some thoughts regarding the quiet time. I remember Dr. Stephen Olford telling me that it was harder for him at the age of 84 to have his daily quiet time than when he was a young man. You wouldn't actually think that with age, a devotional life would be easier but Dr. Olford told me that he had to fight for it every day. He related a story to me about his homiletical mentor, Dr. Graham Scroggie, when he was a student in his class in London, Dr. Scroggie stood at the head of the class while giving a lecture on the importance of prayer and young Stephen Olford raised his hand and blurted out, "But Dr. Scroggie, sometimes I just don't feel like praying." Scroggie looked at him with those steely eyes and threatening mustache and replied, "Stephen, pray when you feel like it. Pray when you don't feel like it. Pray until you do feel like it but pray." And it was Stephen Olford who personally taught me how to have an effective daily quiet time and I want to share with you today, friends, some things that he shared with me in the hope they will help you in your daily devotional walk with God as well.

I want to give you three words today which will help you in your daily time of prayer. These three words are: consistency, communion and concentration because, friends, it's those three things which comprise a close walk with God. Let's begin with the first item on our agenda today, the word consistency. It's critically important to be consistent both in our daily quiet time with God and in our walk with God. We don't want to fall into the pattern which I call elevator Christianity which means this: one day you're on the top floor in the penthouse suite enjoying close fellowship with God then the next day, down you go into the basement of despair and fall into grievous sin and your Christian life is like an elevator that is up and down, here and there. No friends, this should not be. Therefore, we must place a great importance on having a regular daily quiet time where we humble ourselves before God and commune with him in his written word and in prayer.

I have entitled my message today "How To Have A Quiet Time" because much of the success of maintaining a daily time with God is through being consistent and understanding the how-to of having a close walk with God. Hebrew 11:5 states, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Did you catch the significance of this verse, friends? Enoch had first of all, a walk of faith. He

was a man of faith. Secondly, he had a consistent walk with God to such a degree that one day Enoch and God were out walking and it was if God said to Enoch, "Enoch, my boy, I'm enjoying your fellowship so much, why don't we just continue on with it and take it to heaven?" and God translated Enoch as our text tells us. But notice the third thing which stands out in this verse, it says of Enoch "that he pleased God." This speaks of a life of consecration. We cannot be pleasing to God, friends, if we are tolerating sin in our lives. We must repent, turn from our sins and seek cleansing and deeper communion with the Almighty through the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. This is a daily process, a spiritual cleansing of turning from sin and the world and turning to God for more grace to live the Christian life. God is holy and he hates sin. Sin sent Jesus to Calvary, friends. He shed his blood because of sin. The quiet time is a time therefore for spiritual cleansing and empowerment to live the Christian life so we avoid that elevator Christianity and seek to have a more consistent walk with God.

Now I want us to look at this aspect of communion with God because this is what the quiet time is all about. It's not about Bible study per se, to make us Bible scholars. You can be a Bible scholar and still be dead as a doornail. No, it's the very fact of spending time with God. Do you know he enjoys your fellowship, friend? I remember Sidlow Baxter saying this, "What amazes me is that the Creator of the universe deigns to come and visit Sidlow Baxter in my little study each day." Sidlow Baxter maintained a close walk with God up until his 97th birthday. Let me read you a poem that he wrote which I have in my possession and as you listen to it, friends, you can sense the heartbeat of Dr. Baxter as he spent time with his God each day.

That I May Know Him.

Ah, how I long to know.
Not just a Christ of foregone years ago,
Nor even reigning on a heavenly throne,
Too high and distant to be really known.
I long to know him closely, this is how,
Alive and in this ever-pressing now,
A living one within my heart this hour,
Communicating his all-conquering power.
Who now no longer lives from me apart,
But shares his resurrection in my heart.

I like that poem because it illustrates the purpose of a daily quiet time and that is communion with God.

I remember a story about a boy and a dog. There was a boy who grew up in the country on a farm and he had a dog. Each day as the boy woke up and he walked outside, there on the front porch would be his faithful friend wagging his tail. His dog just could not wait to see him. The boy would jump on his bike and the dog would run alongside him, happy as a clam running through the meadows. Each day as that boy came out of the house, that dog was there sitting on the porch wagging his tail, waiting to see his friend and happy to

see him. But one day, the boy met a red-haired girl on a neighboring farm and when that boy woke up, all he could think of was that pretty little red-haired girl and he would rush over to her house down the road. He didn't have time for his dog anymore. He wouldn't even pat his dog on the head when he saw him. He would just walk by him. If the dog tried to follow him by running alongside his bike, the boy would yell at the dog and throw a stick at his old friend.

Now that's a picture of us and God. When we get up in the morning and fail to meet with God, we break his heart because he wants to spend time with us. He is waiting there eager to meet us but we are often too busy, too preoccupied to meet with him. It's a love relationship that's gone stale. But it shouldn't be that way, friends. We should stay in a red-hot love relationship with God at all times. We should make our daily quiet time of the utmost importance and give it top priority in our lives even if it means getting up before the break of day to spend time with our God. Jesus rose early in the morning, a great while before day, to meet with the Father, at least that's what my Bible tells me. He didn't sleep in.

Here now are some suggestions which might help you in having a more effective daily quiet time. First, chose a set time of day to meet God. Make this a daily habit. It is here where you go deeper with him. It is here where he speaks to your heart. First, confess your sins and make sure you're in a right relationship with him. Get clean before you walk with him. Make it a time of worship and praise. Praise him for all he's done in your life. Thank him for all the mercies given and grace bestowed. I keep a handbook at my desk for this purpose and I will open it to a hymn and softly sing it to him while I praise him. Keep a prayer journal where you can write down what God has revealed to you that day. Write down all your thoughts with the Scripture verses beside them.

Keep an index card or yellow sticky notes with names on them to remind you to lift up certain individuals in intercessory prayer. After you adore him, you must intercede on the behalf of others and even nations. I have lists all over my desk with people's names on them, with prayer requests.

After I intercede for others, I then get down on my knees and go to my globe. I keep a big globe in my study and there I'll kneel before it, lay my hands on certain nations and pray for them. I pray specifically for the needs of that nation. It's here where I usually do my revival praying laying hold of God to come and send revival to the church and to the nations to revive his work for his glory. I keep a copy of "Operation World" by my globe so I will know the needs of the certain nations that I'm praying for.

I will study my Bible during this time and reflect upon certain passages which God is using in my life to speak to my heart. Psalm 103 states the following, "He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel." What that means, friends, is the children of Israel saw God perform miracle after miracle but they didn't know him like Moses knew him. Moses had a close, intimate relationship with God. He spent time on the mountain in his very presence and it was during these times of close communion with God that God made known his ways to Moses. That's how it is with us, friends. When we

get alone with God and spend time with him, he then reveals more of himself to us so we can understand his ways and purposes in our lives as we live for him, to bring him glory.

Another thought: you must guard your quiet time. Prepare for it the night before. Don't stay up too late if you're getting up early in the morning. George Whitefield was entertaining some ministers for dinner and at 9:00 he handed them their coats and said, "Gentlemen, we forget ourselves. It is time to head to our houses." One minister turned to Whitefield and complained it was too early to go home to which Whitefield replied he had to go because it was time for him to go to bed because he had an early appointment in the morning. "Who is the appointment with?" asked the pastor. Whitefield replied, "My dear sir, my appointment is with a King." George Whitefield rose at 4 a.m. each day of his life to get alone with his God. So did John Wesley. So did E. M. Bounds. Early rising has often been the mark of individuals mightily used of God because they had such a close walk with God.

When I say guard your quiet time, it can be a battle. Satan does not want you to pray. He'll interrupt you. He does not want you to grow more like Christ each day. But we must remember that a close walk with God will cost us, friends. Anything in life that is worthwhile has a cost associated with it and to have a daily quiet time, it will be a sacrifice to you. Remember: what counts costs and what costs counts.

Listen to the following comments from Samuel Chadwick on the necessity of getting alone with God in prayer.

"Learning to pray is no light undertaking. If prayer is the greatest achievement on earth, we may be sure it will call for a discipline that corresponds to its power. The school of prayer has its conditions and demands. It is a forbidden place to all but those of set purpose and resolute heart.

"The reason so many people do not pray is because of its cost. The cost is not so much in the sweat of agonizing supplication as in the daily fidelity to the life of prayer. It is the acid test of devotion. Nothing in the life of faith is so difficult to maintain."

Listen friends, there is great reward to those who earnestly seek God each day. If you get serious with God, friend, he will get serious with you and the blessings are incredible. How I look forward to my special time with my King each morning. I can't wait to get into his presence and receive my marching orders from him. Get alone with God, friend, and make it a daily habit and you will be enriched.

I will end this message on the quiet time by quoting my late mentor, Dr. Stephen F. Olford, from his little booklet entitled "Manna in the Morning." I highly recommend it to you. Here now are his words on the importance that the first hour of your day is by far the biggest.

"This quiet time with God, is more than a commendable practice; it is absolutely vital to a life of sustained spirituality, effectiveness, and love. It is a barometer of the Christian life. Let me support that position. Jesus said, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.' Read that without the negative comparison and you will see what man is to live on. 'Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.' Literally it is: 'Man shall live by every spoken word that comes from God.'

"That is not hour Bible memorized, nor your Bible on your bookshelf or in your study. It is the word that God speaks to your soul in the quiet place of prayer and meditation. That is how man lives. You can be doctrinally correct, and yet be spiritually dead. The thing that maintains life is the living word of God which is spoken to your soul every day."

I agree with that, friends, and I want to challenge you right now to get alone with God. Ask him to help you have a more effective daily quiet time with him each day. If you only knew the power that is there ready to be unleashed to those who develop a close walk with God. Oh friends, do not delay. Seek God in a deeper way today and go even deeper with him tomorrow. You won't regret it. I promise you that.

Let us pray.