

Benefits of having a daily Quiet Time

Greg Burdine

Devotional for June 22

Life is busy. My calendar is full. When I get to work, the phone calls and emails seem to never stop. My time – your time – is valuable. I don't think any of us would admit this, but we sure have evidenced this in our decisions – I don't have time to spend time in devotions.

There I said it. It seems so unChristian to admit it, but most of us live lives that are so busy, we don't have time to stop and read our Bible and pray, especially in the morning. We barely get up in time to get out the door to start the day.

But think just a minute with me.... don't we make time for things that we see the benefits of? We have time to check our email (several times an hour), because we know how important it is to keep up with conversations. We have time to take a walk or exercise, because we know our health depends on it. We take time to take a 15-minute break at work, because we know it is important to step away from stress for a few minutes before we crack.

So maybe instead of being too busy to pray, we are too busy not to pray! So I thought I would share with you some of the benefits I have found in a daily Quiet Time with God. Just a few minutes at the beginning of my day to read the Bible and pray.

1. Peace
 - You receive peace by refocusing your attention on God, rather than your problems. (**Philippians 4:7**)
2. Joy
 - You receive joy because the source of your strength becomes Christ rather than your circumstances. (**Psalm 16:11**)
3. Fulfillment
 - Spending time alone with Him fulfills the heart like nothing else can. I'm a check list guy. I feel like I've accomplished something when I can check it off on my 'To Do' list. When you spend time with God early, you can check off the #1 most important thing you could do that day.
4. Direction
 - Spending time with God enables Him to give you direction when you need it. You are giving God a chance to direct your paths.
5. Power/Strength
 - God will give you the strength you need to do the things you need to do. (**Isaiah 40:29-31**)
6. Stability (**Psalm 16:8-9**)
7. Success (**Joshua 1:8**)
8. Answered prayer (**John 15:5,7**)

There are many problems you face when you first attempt to have a quiet time. It may be discipline, boredom, concentration, or discouragement.

The main thing to remember is to always pray and ask the Lord to help you. Then commit yourself into doing what He has asked. Then just do it. If you miss, then do it the next day. Don't be committed to the schedule but the purpose.

It is said that Andrew Bonar, a great man of prayer, had three rules: (1) Not to speak to any man before speaking to Jesus; (2) Not to do anything with his hands until he had been on his knees; (3) Not to read the papers until he had read his Bible.

Where to turn when you feel lost
Devotional for June 23

Read

Luke 15

There are so many ways to get lost. Sometimes we think we know where we're going, but we end up on the wrong side of town altogether. Other times we're aware of our navigational deficiencies, but proudly and silently proceed, hoping no one notices. There's something about the challenge of finding your own way that wrongly appeals to pride.

The parables in Luke 15 portray situations where the person or item in trouble had no way of solving the problem. Sheep are foolish animals that follow the cravings of their bellies; they don't know how to tell the difference between what's best for them and what will harm them. Inanimate objects like coins may not be in harm's way when they go astray, but money is of no value if it disappears. Its entire purpose for existing is thwarted. Both of these examples are like our accidental, careless wanderings away from Christ.

In the third situation Jesus describes, the lost son is intentionally walking away from his father. The son's prideful pursuit of sin destroyed him. Though he finally became aware of the error of his ways, he was helpless to change his desperate situation.

There are so many beautiful truths woven into these stories. The owner knows the true value of the lost thing and is always looking for it. Even with the lost son, who belligerently sought his own way, the father's eyes stayed on the horizon, watching for his return. Luke 15:20 says, "...while he was still a long way off, his father saw him..." And there's always a celebration when the lost is found. Whether our path away from Him has been gradual or immediate, accidental or intentional, He always welcomes us back with rejoicing and blessing.

Reflect:

1. Was there a time in your life where you felt closer to Jesus than you do right now?
2. What event led you closer to or further from Jesus?
3. What is one step you can take to walk closer to Jesus today?

Pray

That the Holy Spirit may give you eyes to see the God who is an extravagant Father. And that you may see Jesus as the one who spent his life to make the dead alive and the lost found.

Should we adore Christ or serve Him?

Rob Connelly

Devotional for June 24

Read

Luke 10:38-42

Colossians 2:8-23

Are you the get 'er done person for your church? Or are you the more introspective thoughtful type? Does the other type of person grate on your nerves? Does your love for Christ have both expressions? Jesus teaches us that his disciples are to be both active servants and reflective learners.

The first thing to note here is the invitation by Martha to Jesus into her home. It seems that Martha has taken the initiative in service from the beginning in this way by offering Jesus hospitality as he was in a new place. It is interesting that this is the first mention of the two sisters who both “sat at the Lord’s feet”, so it is difficult to know how they came to know about Jesus, though it is possible that they knew him by reputation before he entered their village. Either way, both sisters evidently wasted little time placing themselves under Jesus as his disciple.

Apparently, the two sisters took differing approaches to following the Lord, at least on this occasion. While Mary sits at the feet of Jesus, Martha was “distracted” by what she saw as those things that “had to be done” in order for the day to go correctly. She then directly compares her own service to what she sees as laziness on the part of her sister Mary – even going so far as to demand that Jesus rebuke Mary!

In the church, there are many tasks, and they are all “urgent” and they can easily distract us from the main thing – following Jesus.

Jesus is by no means teaching here that servant is not of extreme value to the kingdom. However he is instructing us:

1. Discipleship should be marked by both service and stillness, doing and being.
2. While we should encourage one another towards the balance of these two facets of discipleship, Jesus is very clear that when faced with the choice between serving God and showing him our adoration by being “at His feet”, the latter is the correct choice.
3. We must be careful not to judge differing personalities of others (which will manifest themselves in the form discipleship takes for each person) within our church, staff, or ministry. While we are to address sin redemptively according to the Scriptures, we must not, as Martha does, look down upon the form discipleship takes in the lives of others. Martha’s accusatory tone also shows that the motive for her service may be less than pure.

In the church, it is our role to get things done: prepare, execute, administrate, create, maintain, repair, train, etc. This passage is in no way refuting this type of service in church. However, Jesus is teaching us clearly that these functions are not valuable apart from a personal devotion to Christ as his disciple – which requires that we take time to sit at his feet, listen, and be still.

Reflect:

1. If your Christian life (public and private) were to be recorded, how much of the content would center on things you did for Jesus, and how much would center on who you were as his follower (i.e. time you spent in stillness, meditation, Bible absorption, prayer, and study)?
2. How can our technology team(s) be better structured to help us strive for this balance in our personal walks with Christ?

Pray:

That you would not place your attention on secondary issues, empty ceremonies, religious performance based solely on morals and ethics, or on hyper-spirituality, but that you would keep Christ as your focus. Fix your eyes on His deity, lordship, power and authority. Keep me connected to Him.

Submission
Peter Hoytema

Devotional for June 25

Read

Matthew 26:36-56 John 6:40

In connection with praying “Your kingdom come,” Jesus taught us to say, “Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (**Matthew 6:10**).

We can sometimes feel uncertain whether the things we pray for are in line with God’s will. Or perhaps we might think that our confidence is somehow -diminished if we say, “. . . if it be your will” as we pray.

While God’s will is deeply mysterious, there is also something very reassuring about it. Praying “your will be done” does not mean we fully understand God’s will. This is mostly a prayer that expresses our desire to do God’s will. And that is a prayer of strong conviction. It conveys our trust in the goodness of God’s will and our assurance that God will carry out his purposes. And remember, praying within God’s will is about following Jesus’ example.

Today’s Bible reading shows that even Jesus wrestled with his Father’s will and submitted to it. The result of that prayerful struggle was that Jesus could say with firm resolve, “Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!” His connection with the Father was the source of his strength.

The Bible makes it clear that we are saved by faith, not by works (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9**). But it also notes that we are saved to do the Father’s work (**Ephesians 2:10**)-this is the evidence of salvation.

There is nothing weak about submitting to God. Yield-ing to God’s will is the very thing that strengthens us.

Reflect:

On your desire to do God’s will.

1. Is it possible to take up Jesus’ yoke unwillingly?
2. How much do you desire to do God’s will?
3. What struggles do you face in doing so?

Pray:

Lord, sometimes your will seems confusing; guide us to pray like Jesus. Help us to trust you, love you, and obey you. May your will be done in our lives. Amen

An Outlandish Request and Response

Shawn Brix

Devotional for June 26

Read

Luke 23:39-43

What boldness!

Picture it: a convicted felon, admitting that he is being justly punished, asking in his dying moments to be remembered by God's Son! A violent robber, nailed to a cross, gasping for air, asking for some kind of reward!

Something about Jesus made an impact on this condemned man. We sometimes hear of "death-bed conversions," but this was a "cross conversion"! Maybe the man feared meeting God unprepared. After all, the question he put to the criminal on the other side of Jesus was "Don't you fear God?" Or maybe he was struck by Jesus' plea asking God to forgive.

Whatever brought the change within his heart, the former robber turned to Jesus and said, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

He didn't say, "You owe me." He didn't say, "I deserve ...". Instead he pleaded for mercy: "Remember me."

And Jesus responded with a mind-boggling promise: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Two sinners who have lived for themselves are presented with a choice, the same choice that is still offered today. Jesus did not offer paradise because one criminal was more deserving, or was more religious, or did more sacraments than the other. Jesus gave each man exactly what he wanted. One man wanted to continue calling his own shots. The other was willing to submit to a new King.

God's grace is free to save sinners who offer nothing but their need for mercy. That's all the criminal had to offer. But that's all he needed to offer.

That's all we need to offer as well.

Reflect:

1. Which of the two criminals best describes you today? Do you want Jesus to permit you to keep on doing whatever you want? Are you willing to become part of His kingdom, where He rules and sin has no place?
2. Which do you want more? The pleasures of this world and your choices, or the pleasures of Eden and Paradise where Jesus' choices reign?

Pray:

Gracious God, remember me. In your mercy, grant me the gift of eternal life today, tomorrow, and forever, when Jesus returns to make all things new! Amen.

What is ugly is made beautiful

Devotional for June 27

Read

Acts 3:1-16

In Acts 3, Peter and John met a beggar who sat in close proximity to the temple at a gate called “Beautiful.” Everyone knew the beggar at the Beautiful Gate because he had begged there for many years. This man sat a few feet from what should have been a house of healing, unable to enter because the sick and broken were unwelcome in this temple. This man watched for years as healthy temple-goers walked inside to worship and pray. Looking at the condition of the beggar, the term “beautiful” would seem pretty ironic.

C. S. Lewis wrote about “jolly beggars.” I don’t normally connect those two words, but how about the temple beggar in today’s Scripture? Peter did not give him money, which he asked for. Instead Peter introduced him to the miraculous works of Jesus—and the man instantly walked, jumped, and praised God. A jolly beggar indeed!

We might say, “Of course, he’s jolly. But he’s no longer a beggar. He’s a jolly ex-beggar.” In some physical and financial sense he no longer begs. But a beggar relies on others to meet his needs; the dictionary says a beggar “lives by asking for gifts.” That means all of us who know the Lord are active members of a community of beggars.

Where do you see yourself in this story? Perhaps you identify with the beggar — spiritually and emotionally broken. You’ve been stuck in the same place for weeks, months or maybe years. Others call your situation normal, reinforcing your cynicism. You know deep down that definitive change is needed, but how?

Or perhaps you identify with those walking by the beggar. You know something should be done, but what? What can one person do? What can one church do?

If we have known the Lord for a half-day or a half-century, we know that we rely on God to meet our needs. We live by asking for God’s gifts—physical, financial, social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual gifts we cannot live without. And every day in grace he gives us what we need.

No matter where you find yourself in the story, know that hope is found in the name of Jesus. Through Him, healing happens, religion evaporates, communities transform, and lives completely change. Through Jesus, what is broken is made whole and what is ugly is made beautiful.

Reflect:

1. What does this passage teach us about God? How does it apply to you?
2. Are there any broken areas of your life that you have accepted as normal? What’s one step you can take today to begin healing?
3. In Acts 3:11, the beggar held on to Peter and John as they stood by him. Who do you hold on to in times of need? Do you have friends who will help you follow Jesus?

Pray:

That we live by the gifts God of abounding grace. That we may enjoy your His goodness and be jolly about it, through Jesus Christ.