

HOW TO HAVE A REGULAR TIME OUT WITH GOD



PEQUEA
CHURCH

In sports, teams often call a time out. The players will gather around their coach while he diagrams what the next play is to be. These time outs often come when things are starting to unravel. The players need some direction and some encouragement. We too need direction and encouragement in life from the ultimate coach—God! The Bible says God created us and sustains us (John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:3). He knows the struggles we go through and wants to help (Hebrews 4:14-16). He also says He is standing and knocking at the door of our heart waiting to spend time with us (Revelation 3:20).

This little pamphlet is designed to help you understand some of the basics for having a time out with God.

TIME OUT WITH GOD

Once you are convinced that a daily time out with God is needed for your spiritual growth and direction, then what? You may be motivated, but may not know how to go about it.

Here are four essential elements for a meaningful time with God:

- **Start with the proper attitudes.**
- **Select a specific time.**
- **Choose a special place.**
- **Follow a simple plan.**

START WITH THE PROPER ATTITUDES.

In God's eyes, **why** you do something is far more important than what you do. On one occasion, God told Samuel, *"The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). It is quite possible to do the right thing, but with the wrong attitude.

When you come to meet with God in a quiet time, you should have these proper attitudes:

- 1. Expectancy.** Come before God with anticipation and eagerness. David said, *"O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You"* (Psalm 63:1; see Psalm 52:1).
- 2. Reverence.** Don't rush into God's presence, but prepare your heart by being still before Him and letting the quietness clear away the thoughts of the world.
- 3. Alertness.** Get wide-awake first. Remember that you are meeting with the God of the universe, who died for you. The best preparation for a quiet time in the morning begins the night before. Get to bed early so you will be in good shape to meet God in the morning, for He deserves your full attention.
- 4. Willingness to obey.** This attitude is critical. We need to listen to Jesus and what He prompts us to do during our time with Him. *"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says"* (James 1:22).

SELECT A SPECIFIC TIME.

The specific time has to do with when you should have your quiet time and how long it should be. The general rule is this: **The best time is when you are at your best!** Give God the best part of your day...when you are the freshest and most alert. Don't try to serve God with your leftover time. Remember, too, that your best time may be different from someone else's.

For a lot of people, however, early in the morning seems to be the best time. It was Jesus' own practice to rise early to pray and meet with the Father. *"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"* (Mark 1:35).

Whatever time you set, be consistent in it. Schedule it on your calendar; make an appointment with God as you do with others. Then look forward to it and don't stand Him up.

"How much time should I spend with God?" If you've never had a consistent quiet time before, you may want to start with seven minutes (Robert D. Foster, *Seven Minutes with God*, NavPress) and let it grow naturally. I would aim to eventually spend no less than 15 minutes a day with the Lord. Out of the 168 hours we all have during a given week, 1 hour and 45 minutes seems terribly small when you consider that you were created to have fellowship with God.

Here are some additional guidelines:

- **Don't try for a two-hour quiet time at first.** You'll only get discouraged. You must grow in this relationship as you do in any other. So begin with a consistent seven minutes and let it grow; it's better to be consistent with a short time than to meet for an hour every other week.
- **Don't watch the clock.** Clock-watching can ruin your quiet time faster than almost anything else. Sometimes you will go longer than you have set aside, and sometimes less.
- **Don't emphasize quantity; emphasize quality.** There is nothing super-spiritual about having a two-hour quiet time. It's what you do during your time (15 minutes, two hours, or anything in between) that's important. This is a time of devotion, not a project to be completed.

CHOOSE A SPECIAL PLACE.

Many people have found choosing a special place to help in their quiet time. For some, with the schedule you have, this may not be possible.

The best spot is a secluded place. This is a place where you can be alone, where it's quiet, and where you will not be disturbed or interrupted. In today's noisy Western World, this may take some ingenuity, but it is necessary.

It ought to be a place...

- ✓ where you can read aloud without disturbing others.
- ✓ where you have good lighting for reading (a desk, perhaps).
- ✓ where you are comfortable. (WARNING: Do not have your quiet time in bed. It's a recipe for disaster. It tends to be a little too comfortable!)

You don't have to be in a church building. People have had their quiet times in their cars parked in a peaceful place, in an empty closet at home, in their backyards, and even in a baseball dugout. As the days go by, that place will come to mean a lot to you because of the wonderful times you have there with Jesus Christ.

FOLLOW A SIMPLE PLAN.

Someone has said, "If you aim at nothing, you are sure to hit it!" To have a meaningful quiet time, you will need a plan or some kind of general outline to follow. The main rule is this: Keep your plan simple.

Here are some suggested items to take to your quiet time:

- ☐ Bible—a contemporary translation.
- ☐ Notebook—for writing down what God shows you, and for making a prayer list.
- ☐ Music—music tapes/books may help you to praise God (Colossians 3:16).

The following six-point plan is workable to a quiet time of any duration.

1. Wait on God (Relax). Be still for a minute; don't come running into God's presence and start talking immediately. Follow God's counsel: *"Be still, and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10; see also Isaiah 30:15; 40:31). Be quiet for a short while, to put yourself into a reverent mood.

2. Pray briefly (Request). This is not your prayer time, but a short opening prayer to ask God to cleanse your heart and guide you into the time together. Two good passages of Scripture to memorize are: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Psalm 139:23-24; see 1 John 1:9). *"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law"* [the Word] (Psalm 119:18; see John 16:13).

You need to be in tune with the Author before you can understand His Book!

3. Read a section of the Scripture (Read). This is where your conversation with God begins. He speaks to you through His Word, and you speak with Him in prayer. Read your Bible...

➤ **Slowly.** Don't be in a hurry; don't try to read too large an amount; don't race through it.

➤ **Repeatedly.** Read a passage over and over until you start to picture it in your mind. The reason more people don't get more out of their Bible reading is that they do not read the Scriptures repeatedly.

➤ **Without stopping.** Don't stop in the middle of a sentence to go off on a tangent and do a doctrinal study. Just read that section for the pure joy of it, allowing God to speak to you. Remember that your goal here is not to gain information, but to feed on the Word and get to know Christ better.

➤ **Aloud but quietly.** Reading it aloud will improve your concentration if you have that problem. It will also help you understand what you are reading better because you will be both seeing and hearing what you are reading.

➤ **Systematically.** Read through a book at a time in an orderly method. Do not use the “random dip” method—a passage here, a chapter there, what you like here, an interesting portion there. You’ll understand the Bible better if you read it as it was written—a book or letter at a time.

➤ **To get a sweep of a book.** On some occasions you may want to survey a whole book. In that case, you will read it quickly to get a sweep of the total revelation. Then you need not read it slowly or repeatedly.

4. Meditate and memorize (Reflect and Remember). In order to have the Scriptures speak to you meaningfully, you should meditate on what you are reading and memorize verses that particularly speak to you. Meditation is “seriously contemplating a thought over and over in your mind.” Out of your meditation, you might select and memorize a verse that is particularly meaningful to you.

5. Write down what God has shown you (Record). When God speaks to you through His Word, record what you have discovered. Writing it down will enable you both to remember what God revealed to you and to check up on your biblical discoveries. Recording what God has shown you is the way of applying what you see in the Scripture that pertains to your life.

6. Have your time of prayer (Request). After God has spoken to you through His Word, speak to Him in prayer. This is your part of the conversation with the Lord.

Here is a sample outline for prayer using the acrostic ACTS.

Adoration. This is the purest kind of prayer because it’s all for God. You don’t barge into the presence of royalty. You begin with the proper salutation. So worship Him. Tell the Lord that you love Him. Reflect on His greatness, His power, His majesty, His grace, and His mercy!

Confession. Confession is acknowledging and agreeing with God that there is sin in your life. It is repenting/turning from it and going in a different direction. It means to agree with God. Something happened yesterday you called a slight exaggeration—God calls it a lie! You call it strong language—God calls it swearing. You call it telling the truth about somebody in the church—God calls it gossip. *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”* (Psalm 66:18).

Thanksgiving. Express your gratitude to God. Think of several specific things to thank Him for: your family, your business, your church

and ministry responsibilities. *"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you"* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Supplication. The Bible says we have not because we ask not. This is when we let all our needs be known to God—our needs and the needs of others that we feel burdened about.

What if I miss a day? Don't worry about it if it only happens occasionally. Don't go on a guilt trip. *"There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). Don't get legalistic. Missing one day does not make it a flop. Don't give up. If you miss a meal, it does not mean that you should give up eating because you're inconsistent. You simply eat a little more at the next meal and go on from there.

Psychologists tell us that it usually takes us three weeks to get familiar with some new task or habit. It takes another three weeks before it becomes a habit. The reason why many people are not successful in their quiet times is because they have never made it past that six-week barrier. Don't give up—stick with it.

William James had a famous formula for developing a habit (Selected Papers on Philosophy, E. P. Dutton & Co., pp. 60-62):

- 1. Make a strong resolution (Vow).** You must always start with a strong, decided initiative. If you begin halfheartedly, you'll never make it. Make a public declaration by telling others about your decision.
 - 2. Never allow an exception to occur until the new habit is securely rooted in your life.** A habit is like a ball of twine. Every time you drop it, many strands are unwound. So never allow the "just this once" to occur. The act of yielding weakens the will and strengthens the lack of self-control.
 - 3. Seize every opportunity and inclination to practice your new habit.** Whenever you get the slightest urge to practice your new habit, do it right then. Don't wait, but use every opportunity to reinforce your habit. It does not hurt to overdo a new habit when you are first starting.
- To these suggestions I would add one more:
- 4. Rely on the power of God.** When it is all said and done, you must realize that you are in a spiritual battle, and you can only succeed by the power of the Holy Spirit. So pray that God will strengthen you and depend on Him to help you develop this habit for His glory.

If you have been convinced that this is what you need to do, would you pray the following?

A PRAYER OF COMMITMENT


"Lord, I commit myself to spending a definite time with you every day, no matter what the cost. I am depending on your strength to help me to be consistent."

ACCOUNTABILITY

Be accountable to someone to help you stay consistent. Give them permission to ask you how it is going.



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