

## **How To Have Effective Personal, Private Devotions**

When I began my friendship with God, I did so in the manner of daily, private devotions. The verse that broke my heart as a teen was Genesis 17:3, which says, *“And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him...”* I knew this was the Lord calling me to His side in intimacy. This is what I want for every member of Christchurch. I want to stir your hearts for personal, private devotions with God. The following is a short list of how to make devotions effective, lasting and meaningful.

### **1. Make devotions an irrevocable commitment.**

Treat devotions like an appointment with a very important person. The President of the United States or Queen of England should not be treated better than the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! The trip our Lord took to the garden of Gethsemane was not the first time. The Bible says, *“And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him”* (Luke 22:39). *“As He was wont”* means “as was usual.” It was Christ’s prayer spot in that locale of the country. By the way, the Devil now in possession of Judas knew right where to find Jesus - in the place of prayer.

We also find our Lord had an appointment with the Father in the morning. *“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed”* (Mark 1:35). I have found as a rule, if I can begin my day with God, the remains of the day is far better for having spent the first portion of time with Him.

### **2. Investigate how others have devotions, but do not compare.**

Discouragement is one of the main fronts of the battlefield of prayer. Remember Samuel Chadwick was right when he said, “The one concern of the Devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.” So how does he most often defeat Christians in keeping us from wholehearted effort? I would suggest he does so by discouraging us. One of the most discouraging traps is when we get caught in the competition syndrome. The Bible says, *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise”* (II Corinthians 10:12). It is fine to receive insight and encouragement from the way others have devotions, but please be careful not to compare. If you are a slower reader and will not get as much out of your devotions as some who read faster, then realize they are not doing it better, just different. Some are more vocal when they pray. Some will have longer devotions. Pray and read your Bible in the manner you are instructed to give: *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart...”* (II Corn. 9:7).

### **3. Understand devotions to be dialogue, not monologue.**

It has been said, “When you pray, you talk to God; when you read your Bible, He talks to you.” This is true, but there is nothing that says when you pray that God cannot talk with you or when you read your Bible you cannot talk to God. The truth is when I pray, I find that it becomes very effective to pause and allow God to harness my thoughts and direction and lead further into the thoughts I am thinking as I pray or change the course of my prayer and even direct me on to another subject. I find that as I read the Bible that God begins to stir my heart to pray about the very thing I am reading. Or He may stimulate my heart with the Word to address Him on another matter that came to mind while reading the Scriptures. Remember, our devotions should always be dialogue. How boring indeed devotions can become if we are the only one doing the talking. Jesus said, *“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear”* (Matthew 13:9).

### **4. Keep variety in your devotions.**

For me, as a rule the same place and the same time is the best way to have devotions. I have found that if I do begin to get stale in devotions, a simple diversion of changing locations helps. We may find ourselves awaking, like Jacob, to God's presence when we change our devotions plan. *"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not"* (Genesis 28:16).

### **5. Train up a child to have devotions.**

If we insist on our children eating, should we not also allocate time alone with God? I know the argument may be well made that we can't make them pray. I will not argue this point, but you can carve out in a niche in the best part of your child's day for walking with God. God willing, when they grow up, even if they did not always communicate with the Lord, you are making the time available, which is not lost; you have made an important point of the importance of devotions. *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6).

### **6. Read your Bible with a threefold goal.**

As you read your Bible, keep these three objects in mind: (1) Find the message. By asking yourself who is talking, to whom is the address being given, and what are the circumstances we can find the message. (2) Find Jesus. If we read our Bible, we shall be amazed at how often we see Jesus in literal reference, by prophesy or by type. (3) Apply what you read. How does what you read relate to you? How can we be obedient to a truth we have come across? These are two important questions. When the priests opened the Scripture in Nehemiah, notice what happened: *"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading"* (Nehemiah 8:8). This is what we need to do when we read and study our Bible. Read distinctly, give the sense, attempt to understand and act on what you read.

### **7. Memorize Scripture.**

*"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee"*

(Psalms 119:11). Hiding the Word of God in your heart will aid you in becoming more spontaneous in prayer. You will know better what to pray and how to pray as you develop the mind of Christ in Bible memory.

Memorizing Scripture is like taking a plow to your heart. The seed of the Word will grow better. Devotions take on an air of inspiration. *"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you"* (Hosea 10:12).

In conclusion you will (1) live with less stress (2) become a friend of God and (3) be a blessing by connecting heaven to earth. *"And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God"* (James 2:23).

- Pastor Pope -

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