

How to Have a Quiet Time

What is a "quiet time"?

A quiet time is a time of direct contact between your mind and God's, using the Bible and prayer. It is a time of dedication, cleansing, instruction, strengthening, and delight. Bible study and prayer are not simply for our sake. God deeply desires our fellowship and worship—it gives Him joy and pleasure! (John 4:23). Think from this perspective. If you're not moved by this fact, you have not understood it.

Communication with God must be daily (Josh. 1:8, 9). To know God (not just to know about God) is the goal. How we pray, delight, and think on God is the only true measure of whether our relationship with Him is alive (John 15:4). God bought (in blood) personal access to His presence for us. Even Abraham and Moses did not have this (II Cor. 3:12-18; Matt. 27:51). Moses was denied (Ex. 33:18, 20; II Cor. 4:6) that which we may have each morning (John 4:21-23).

The maintaining of a daily quiet time is perhaps the most consistently difficult duty of the Christian life. Its difficulty is a humbling reminder of our lack of commitment to Him. There's no question but that a quiet time will greatly facilitate Christian growth and obedience.

What are the goals of a quiet time?

1. *Worship*: to get to know Him, to be humbled by His holiness, comforted by His love, and strengthened by His presence.
2. *Change*: to root out sins and establish biblical attitudes and actions in your life.

How do I have a quiet time?

1. First, *meet God*. Still your heart, ask for His presence, concentrate. You may wish to praise Him a bit with a psalm to "warm up" your heart. Take a psalm and look for things to praise Him for.
2. Second, *listen to God* by reading a passage from his Word. Don't choose more than a chapter! Read it carefully, reverently, intelligently; read it more than once. Pick out what you think is the central thought of the passage. Record that thought and/or some other truth that has struck you, in your own words. Then determine what God's message is for you. Once this is determined, record it, and think of some way to practice or act upon the message if possible. Is there:
 - A promise to claim?
 - A sin to confess?
 - A command to obey?
 - An example to follow?
 - An error to avoid?
 - A new thought about God?

Another simple way of feeding on the text is to ask:

- How does this passage help me adore God?
- How does it lead me to see and hate my sin?
- How does it lead me to ask for grace?

Once we have asked those questions, then we can ask:

- How is Jesus the best example of this attribute (character quality) of God that I adore?
- How is Jesus the ultimate solution to the sin that I am confessing?
- How is Jesus the ultimate source for the grace that I need?

3. Third, *talk to God* through prayer. The elements of prayer are:

- *Praise and thanksgiving*. Be specific. Search your life and mind for things to thank Him for and then praise Him for. ("Thank you for letting me lose that contest! I see how wise you are—it would have been bad for me! Thank you for forgiving me after the way I acted yesterday; how merciful you are.")
- *Requests for self and others*. Be specific. Unload your burdens and pour out your feelings. Paul Miller writes, "The only way to come to God is by taking off any spiritual mask. The real you has to meet the real God. He is a person. Come overwhelmed with life. Come with a wandering mind. Come messy. So, instead of being frozen by your self-preoccupation, talk with God about your worries. Tell him where you are weary. If you don't begin with where you are, then where you are will sneak in the back door. Your mind will wander to where you are weary." Also make a list of things to pray about for family and friends. Use the list daily to pray.
- *Confession*. Search your life for sins committed since yesterday. Search for good deeds you avoided doing as well! Ask for cleansing, and then thank him for his full forgiveness through Christ's blood.

How can I get started?

- Make a commitment right now to begin a daily quiet time. Be consistent in time and place. Start with about 20 minutes. It should be unhurried. The place for it should be quiet. Morning is ideal.
- Use a notebook. Expect dry periods! That's no excuse for stopping. Every so often change your format or the book of the Bible you are reading to avoid stagnation.
- Share what you are learning in your quiet time with other Christians. Get a hold of a good quiet time guide, if you wish. The pastoral team will be able to show you a variety of materials.
- Finally, begin your quiet time with a conscious appeal to the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart, awaken your affections, and enlighten your mind to the beauty of God in Christ. Paul prays this way for the Ephesian believers, asking that: *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places...* (Eph 1:17-20).

This material, with a few subsequent alterations and additions, was produced by Tim Keller. Any alterations or additions are the sole responsibility of Frontline Church.

Fold along the dotted line and tuck into your Bible or accompanying notebook