

HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME

WHAT'S A DAILY QUIET TIME?

Rick Warren once wrote the following words: “Your daily quiet time should be the absolute number one priority of your life.”

What is a daily quiet time? Throughout the centuries it's been called many things by Christ followers, such as the morning watch, personal devotions, appointment with God, and the personal devotion time. Regardless of what you call it, what's important is that you have a quiet time regularly.

Simply put, a daily quiet time is a daily time of personal fellowship with God through the Word and prayer. More specifically, it's a period of time you set aside to be alone with God, usually in the morning, to talk to Him and to listen to Him as you prepare to be used by Him that day.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Why is it important to have a daily quiet time? There are two major motivations for having a daily quiet time that I want to mention.

First, a daily quiet time will help you grow spiritually more than anything else. Following Jesus is a relationship, not a religion. And in order to get to know someone intimately and to enjoy him personally, you have to do three things:

1. Spend quality time with him,
2. Communicate meaningfully with him,
3. And observe Him in a variety of situations.

That's exactly the benefits you get from a daily quiet time. When you schedule a daily appointment to focus on Jesus, your faith will grow more than ever before, and you will become more productive and useful than ever before. The more time you spend with Jesus, the more you will get to know Him. And the more time you spend with Him, the more you will become like Him.

Any relationship is only as strong as the communication going on. If that's true, how much would your relationship with God deepen and grow and benefit if you had a date with God first thing every day?

Have you ever heard someone say about their church, “I'm not being fed here”? The person who is having a consistent, meaningful daily quiet time will never have to worry about not being fed. Why? They have learned that the secret to spiritual growth is not relying upon somebody else for spoon feeding, but learning how to self-feed, and taking personal

responsibility for their own spiritual nourishment. When you develop a daily quiet time, you can enjoy as much spiritual food as you want.

The Bible is our spiritual food, and prayer is spiritual breathing, yet many Christians go all week long without eating or breathing spiritually and show up on Sundays hoping that one hour a week will fill them up spiritually. It never does. A daily quiet time will help you grow spiritually like nothing else.

A second motivation to have a daily quiet time is to become more useful to God. God created you to make a major impact with your life. He wants to work in and through you to communicate His love and truth and impact many people for Christ's sake. And I don't think there is anything you can do that will make you more useful to God than a daily quiet time.

You should talk to God about your friends every day before you talk to your friends about God, and you should see the face of God every morning before the you see the faces of your friends.

In John 15:5 Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." In six verses in John 15, Jesus uses the word "remain" ten times. To remain means to stay closely connected. A branch's fruit-producing potential is dependent upon the quality its connection to the vine. Since that's also true of you, how intimately are you connected to Jesus? A daily appointment with Christ will help you maintain that quality connection for maximum fruit production.

You need to know that every great man or woman of God throughout the history has spent much time alone with God. Anyone who has ever been used mightily by the Lord was a man or woman of the Word and prayer. The regular quiet time was the one thing they had in common. The common denominator between Moses, David, Daniel, Paul, Calvin, Wesley, Finney, Spurgeon, Billy Graham, Bill Bright, Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, Charles Stanley, Adrian Rogers, Chuck Swindoll, and all of the great saints of history is that they all spent much time with God in personal fellowship. Someone has said, "If you want to find out what a man is really like, find out what he is like alone with God." Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, once said, "I have so much to do today that I must spend at least three hours in prayer." The busier he was, the more time he needed with God.

Why have a daily quiet time? It will help you grow spiritually, and it will help you become more useful to God.

WHAT DO I NEED TO GET STARTED?

What do you need to do to have a daily quiet time? First, set aside a specific time and place for your daily quiet time. As far time goes, the key is to give God the best part of your day. When are you at your best? For me, and for most people, the best time is first thing in the morning. That's when I have the most energy, when the house is the quietest, and when I can be the most consistent. The morning may not be the best time for you. The key is spend time with

God when you are at your best. But it is important that you pencil in your time. In other words, make an appointment with God just as you would a meeting with an associate or a customer, or a date with your spouse. Pencil it in your calendar and don't allow anything to interfere.

As far as the place or setting for your daily quiet time, find a place where you will be free of distractions, where you can be alone, and where you have all the resources you need. For me, it's in my home office. One person wrote that the place for you quiet time ought to be a place where you can pray aloud (and maybe sing) without disturbing others, where you can have good lighting for reading (a desk, perhaps), and where you are comfortable. And by the way, don't have your quiet time in bed; that may lead to more sleeping than praying.

Once you pick out the specific time and place for your daily quiet time, there are a few resources that will enhance your experience. First, you're going to need a Bible. Second, you're going to need a journal and something to write with. I personally use the computer for my journal, because I prefer typing over writing. I also recommend that you purchase some highlighters for your Bible.

Once you've set aside a time and a place, and you have the resources you need, such as Bible, pen, paper, computer, and highlighters, you're just about ready to have a meaningful, daily quiet time.

JOURNALING

Next I want to teach you some effective techniques for journaling, prayer, and Bible reading that will ensure you get the most out of your daily quiet time.

These are the techniques that I've discovered and adopted over many years of following Christ. They work well for me and for many others, but they may not work well for you. You may be able to use some of these methods and ideas or all of them. The important thing is to figure out what works well for you and then to get in to the habit of having a daily quiet time with God.

Let's begin with an effective technique for journaling, because it's the first thing I do, and it ties in with prayer and Bible-reading. Bill Hybels writes about journaling in his book *Honest to God, Becoming an Authentic Christian*. Whenever he would meet a strong Christian leader who seemed to have a really vibrant, healthy relationship with Jesus, he would ask them their secret. And in almost every case they said "journaling" – "the daily process of examining and evaluating their lives in written form."

Did you catch that? Journaling is the daily process of examining and evaluating your life in written form. Just as a football team spends Monday morning evaluating the previous day's game so they can learn from their mistakes and progress, journaling will help you do the same.

The first thing to do in your quiet time is to begin writing in your journal. After writing the date, begin by writing the word “Yesterday.” Hybels says, “Write a brief description of people you met with, decisions you made, thoughts or feelings you had, high or low points, frustrations, Bible reading—anything about the previous day. Then analyze it. Did you make good decisions or bad decisions? Did you use your time wisely or waste it? Should you have done anything differently?” Hybels recommends that you restrict yourself to one page for this exercise.

After evaluating the previous day, it’s time to begin praying. But this is what has made the difference for me in my quiet time: Writing out my prayers. Before, when I didn’t write out my prayers word for word, I had a hard time being consistent with my prayers. My mind would wander. I’d fall asleep. I’d forget what I’d prayed for and repeat myself over and over again. And I’d get bored pretty quickly. But then I began writing out my prayers and it has been a major breakthrough for me. I recommend you give it a try as well.

Again, I want to remind you that I use my computer for journaling and rather than writing in a notebook. I find typing to be much more enjoyable and relaxing than writing. But do whatever works for you.

BALANCED PRAYER

Now I want to teach you an effective technique for prayer in your daily quiet time. These are called the four legs of balanced prayer. It’s an acronym spelled ACTS, which stands for adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. This will help you to have a balanced prayer life.

After writing about and evaluating yesterday, I begin with adoration. I write the word *adoration* and then write a paragraph or so of praise to God. I tell God how much I love Him, and why I love Him. Sometimes I’ll sing a song with my guitar, or read aloud the words of a favorite Psalm from the Bible. The point is to focus this time on adoring God.

Next, I write the word *confession*, and write a paragraph or so, confessing my sins to God. If you want a healthy relationship with God, it’s important to keep a short account with God. To confess is to admit your sins to God, apologize, and commit to turning away from them. And be specific here if you want it to count. Confess your sins, commit to turn from them, ask God to forgive you, and then believe that He will. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

After adoration and confession, I then write the word *thanksgiving* and devote a paragraph or two to thanking God for His blessings. This has many times been my favorite part of prayer because it cheers me up. I wouldn’t realize how blessed I was if I didn’t take the time to daily thank God. I thank Him for His provisions, His blessings, my friends and family, my health, my church, and on and on and on.

After thanksgiving, it's time for supplication. I write the word *supplication*, and then I begin praying for all of my needs, worries, concerns, dreams, problems, annoyances, friends, family, our nation, the world, etc. Again, it's important to be very specific for prayer to have any meaning.

After using the ACTS prayer technique, it's then time to do a little listening. Still writing word for word in your journal, Bill Hybels recommends that you listen by asking God four questions. I don't always use all four questions, but I usually use one or two. I will write the question, and then ask God to speak to me, and then write down whatever strong impressions that come to mind. First, begin with the question, "What is the next step in my relationship with You, God?" And then write. Second ask the question, "What's the next step in the development of my character?" Third ask, "What's the next step in my family life?" And fourth ask the question, "What's the next step in my ministry?" And then write. The important thing is not that you use these exact questions, but that you ask God to speak to you and then listen. You might ask, "What's the next step in my dating relationship?" Or, "What's the next step in my education or profession?" For me, I have a specific goal I'm trying to reach in my ministry right now, and I regularly ask, "What's the next step in accomplishing that goal?"

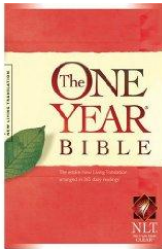
I want you to remember that God loves you, He is near you and living in you, and He is speaking to you. You just need to take the time and develop the ability to hear Him clearly. And these journaling and prayer techniques will help you.

BIBLE READING

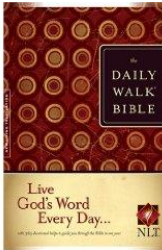
I now want to teach you an effective technique for Bible reading. When Jesus came in to my life and saved me at the age of 11, I immediately began reading my Bible every day, and I've been at it ever since. Nothing has been more rewarding and beneficial to me than getting into God's Word every day, and more importantly getting God's Word in to me. Let me give you a few suggestions for reading the Bible.

First, you need an easy-to-understand Bible translation. We live in a wonderful time in history, and in wonderful part of the world, where we have access to many different Bible versions, almost all of which are accurate. But some are easier to read and understand than others. The old King James Version, for example, can be pretty hard to understand, even if you enjoy its style. I recommend that you purchase a New Living Translation Bible, or a New International Version Bible. And make sure that you purchase a Bible with print that is large enough to read. I have 20/20 eyesight and I still prefer a large-print Bible.

Once you get a good Bible, let's talk about a Bible reading plan. It's very important that you read the Bible systematically, one book of the Bible at a time. You can read one book of the Bible at a time and bounce around from book to book, but I highly recommend that you either read through the entire New Testament from start to finish, or even the entire Bible from start to finish, and I recommend that you do this over and over again. Here's how you can get started.



There are two resources that I highly recommend: The One Year Bible, New Living Translation, and the Daily Walk Bible, New Living Translation. The One Year Bible is broken up in to 365 daily readings to lead you all the way through the Bible in one year. Each day's reading includes a selection from the Old Testament, Psalms, Proverbs, and a selection of the New Testament. This way you're reading through the Old and New Testaments at the same time.



The Daily Walk Bible is also arranged into 365 daily readings to lead you through the entire Bible in a year. However, with the Daily Walk Bible, you read straight through the Bible, cover to cover, Genesis through Revelation. But the Daily Walk Bible is different because each day's reading begins with a chart and an overview to explain what you're about to read, and then there is a devotion and several insights that go along with every day's reading to help you understand and apply the Bible to your life. I highly recommend the Daily Walk Bible for new Bible readers as well as seasoned Christ followers who are looking to try something new.

HIGHLIGHTERS

As I read the Bible I like to highlight the portions that stick out and mean the most to me. At the Family Christian Store they have special highlighter pencils that are made specifically so they don't bleed through thin Bible pages. I use four different colors, which I use to highlight different things. I use blue to highlight any truths to believe. I use yellow to highlight any promises to claim. I use green to highlight any commands to obey or examples to follow, and I use pink to highlight any sins or errors to avoid. It's always fun to go back from time to time and look at my past highlights.

So that's it. These are the essentials of how to have a meaningful, consistent daily quiet time with God. And again, you don't have to implement all of these ideas and techniques. The important thing is to make a new commitment to have a daily quiet time, and don't allow anything else in this world to interfere with your regular time with God.

OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES ON A DAILY QUIET TIME

1. [Too Busy Not to Pray](#), by Bill Hybels
2. [Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods](#), by Rick Warren