

Daily Time With God

If you are only recently beginning to discover what it means to spend time with God each day in prayer and Bible reading, a great place to start is in the Gospel of John in the New Testament (4th book). This book is an eyewitness account of Jesus' life from the disciple John's perspective. It clearly presents Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour of all who will accept and follow Him. As Christ-followers, it's important that we spend time alone with God each day. Like any relationship we care about, we will be willing to invest in.

Journaling:

In reading your Bible to remember and apply what you read, a good practice is 'journaling'. Simply put, journaling is keeping a written record of your personal reflection, including thoughts and questions, from the Bible passages you read. It is also a good idea to write a sentence or two regarding what action steps you will take to help you apply what you have read in God's Word to your every day life. Journaling may be something you do every day or weekly. Experiment and find out what works for you.

Bible Reading: S.O.A.P.

Often our success at connecting with the Bible has to do with how we perceive it. It may be helpful for you to think of the Bible (God's Word) as His personal 'love letter' to you. In other words, He loves you so much that He made sure to leave, in writing, His expression of love for you and instructions on how you can know Him personally and eternally!

The following outline is not intended to be a formula, but rather a tool to help you form a consistent habit in reading God's Word. This approach is often referred to with the word, 'SOAP' (it's appropriate in that the Bible applied to our lives does have a cleansing effect):

S-cripture

Choose a book in the Bible, like the Gospel of John, and focus on it for a period of time. Think 'quality' not necessarily 'quantity'. Take time reading a chapter and allow God to speak to you. Don't rush through just so you can say you got your reading 'done'. As you read, watch for a phrase, verse, or paragraph that particularly speaks to you that day, and write it in a journal. As was mentioned above, a journal is an effective tool that will allow you to write your thoughts, questions and reflections about passages that impacted you.

O-bservation

What do you think God is saying to you in this chapter, paragraph or verse? Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and reveal Jesus to you. In John 14:26 Jesus told His followers that "*...the Holy Spirit...will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.*" As thoughts and observations come to your mind about Bible passages or phrases that caught your attention, write in your own words what you feel God is saying to you from His Word.

A-pplication

Personalize your Bible reading by asking how it applies to your life right now. Perhaps it is instruction or encouragement you glean from the Scriptures you are reading. Possibly it's correction for a particular area of your life. Write a line or two in your journal about how this Bible passage, verse or phrase applies to you today. Think about, and record, how you feel you need to think or act in light of the challenge from God's Word. Add a statement of commitment regarding what your follow through will look like.

P-rayer:

Remember, prayer is a two-way conversation, so be sure to listen to what God has to say! Much of what God wants to say to us will come directly from His Word (the Bible). There will be other times that we sense God prompting us in some way because we've slowed down enough and opened our heart enough to say, "Lord, I want you to lead me today."

Your time with God in prayer could sometimes involve praying through the following acronym:
P.R.A.Y.E.R.

Praise – No matter what we may be going through in life, praising God for who He is and for His many amazing attributes is a spiritual discipline that will draw us closer to Him. The book of Psalms in the Bible has many helpful verses on what praise can look like.

Repent – As Christ-followers, it's important for our spiritual health to be open to God's correction and reminders about things we've said or done that are sinful.

Ask for others – There will be concerns you have for others. Present these to God, asking for His grace to be extended to those you are thinking about.

Yourself – God cares about every one of our needs. As a child that goes to a loving father, God wants us to come to Him and talk about issues of life that are struggles as well as sharing the joys with Him.

Express Thanks – We can always find things to thank God for. It's important to make this a habit.

Reflect – Silence and solitude are not very common in our culture. It's in an environment like that, however, that we can positively reflect on what God's Word is saying to us and reflect on aspects of God's care for us as we sit in His presence each day.

Remember, God is a personal God who can be known and wants to know you. Spend time with Him each day and experience His peace, wisdom, strength, comfort... and whatever else you need in order to live life "to the full". (John 10:10)