



transform
discipleship mentoring

Obeying Christ...Making Disciples

“Go therefore and make disciples..”

Matthew 28:19

LEVEL ONE

ESTABLISH

Transformed Relationship



Your Prayer Life & Your alone time with God

6

A Discipleship Ministry Resource Provided by
Faith Assembly of God

254 Spackenkill Rd., Poughkeepsie NY
(845) 462- 0662



YOUR PRAYER LIFE AND ALONE TIME WITH GOD

Establishing Transformed Relationships

Lesson 6

INTRODUCTION

YOUR PRAYER LIFE & YOUR ALONE TIME WITH GOD

The alarm clock buzzes as the dark fog outside my window evaporates; it is morning again. In a last ditch effort to disconnect from the obligations of the day and cling to the warmth of my cocoon, I hit the snooze bar... again! Sound familiar? There is nothing natural about getting up early to spend alone time with God? It is a struggle we all experience ... my spirit cries out for nourishment yet my body appeals for more sleep. Do I really believe that communion with God is vital or does my lack of zeal confirm otherwise?

For years I struggled to spend consistent, meaningful alone time with God. My intentions were good, but my noble efforts seemed doomed to fail. As a Christian leader, the guilt and shame I carried over this inconsistency were intense. After all, isn't spending alone time with God supposed to be easy, something we really want to do? Why was I having such a hard time with this?

THE CULPRIT

The answers to these questions plagued me and caused me to cry out to God, *"Give me a hunger and a thirst for You and Your Word. Teach me to pray. Don't leave me as I am."* This prayer ushered me into a season of trials and tragedies that challenged my faith and left me totally out of control. I was desperate for direction, hope, peace, strength, and wisdom. In short, *I was desperate for God.*

This desperation was the missing piece, for the root of my struggle to connect with God was **self-sufficiency**. I was attempting to add another pious act to my Christian life, rather than seeking true **intimacy with God**. This is a bridge we must all travel on, face and cross over. In **Isaiah 29:13**, God laments His people's ritualistic service. He says that they come near Him with their mouth and honor Him with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. Following rules taught by men does not please or impress God.

HE IS ABLE

The root of the struggle to commune with God is a heart issue. The solution to this struggle is the Spirit of God, who is able to do immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us (**read Ephesians 3:20**). For on our own, we can do nothing (**read John 15:5**). As I have shared with other people in ministry, I have realized that this struggle is not uncommon, abnormal, or impossible to overcome. There is victory! I found it and so can you.

Close this devotional with a sincere prayer like this: "Give me a hunger and a thirst for You and Your Word. Teach me to pray. Don't leave me as I am." May God bless you richly and may you sense his wonderful presence.

by Marcia McCready-Pallant

YOUR PRAYER LIFE AND ALONE TIME WITH GOD

Establishing Transformed Relationships

5 WAYS TO WIN THE QUIET TIME BATTLE - PART 1

Victory Step #1: Plug into the Power – PRAY

There is nothing natural about communing with God; it is supernatural. Neither the desire nor the encounter comes from our natural man, for *it is God who works in us* “to will and to act according to His good purpose” (read **Philippians 2:13**). Attempting to manufacture a consistent, meaningful encounter with God in our own strength is doomed to fail for we lack the divine element that makes success possible. It is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit (read **Zechariah 4:6**). This truth should drive us to prayer, our access to God’s transforming power.

Victory Step #2: Personal Planning - PRIORITIZE

“Come near to God and He will come near to you” (read **James 4:8**). Start looking at your daily quiet time as a personal appointment. Jesus is waiting for you to show up. Don’t stand Him up! Write this appointment in your planner. Make it a priority rather than an option. In Gail MacDonald’s book, *High Call High Privilege*, she suggests that we treat this appointment with Christ as any other. If some sort of legitimate interference makes it impossible to meet with Him, we need to reschedule for a later time that same day. We need to understand that our time is important to God. He is Emmanuel, God with us. Our busy and somewhat turbulent lives need the solace that comes from being reminded that God is with us. Jesus says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (read **Matt. 11:28**). God promises to bless abundantly all those who seek His kingdom and righteousness first (read **Matt. 6:33**). So set the appointment. It will be well worth your time.

Victory Step #3: The Price of Discipleship – PREPARE TO PAY

We live in a culture driven by instant gratification and selfish desires. There is much talk of privileges, rights, freedom, and happiness. Unfortunately, the concept of sacrifice is not popular, even among Christians. Yet, Jesus clearly instructs His followers to *deny themselves and take up their cross*, which symbolizes faithfulness to the point of death (Matt. 16:24). Establishing a consistent, meaningful time with God requires sacrifice. As you attempt to carve out your ‘alone time’ with God, you will face decisions to sacrifice sinful desires or worthless activities in order to become an authentic disciple. For me, sacrifice involved providing my body with the proper rest in order to be alert. I am a night owl, which means that I thrive after 10 p.m. Unfortunately, this tends to rob me of the energy needed for the following day. I have tried to have my quiet time at night, but still found myself too exhausted in the morning to reap any real spiritual benefit. After fighting this battle for years, I have found that for me going to bed earlier is prerequisite to spending meaningful time with God in the morning. Being awake enough to seek God is well worth the sacrifice of my late nights. I will not offer the Lord that which cost me nothing (read **2 Sam. 24:24**).

YOUR PRAYER LIFE AND ALONE TIME WITH GOD

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5 WAYS TO WIN THE QUIET TIME BATTLE - PART 2

How about you?

What sacrifices do you need to make in order to spend quality alone time with God? Again, prayer is the key to winning this battle. Through prayer, the Holy Spirit grants the wisdom and desire to let go of what seems **precious** to gain what is far more **valuable**. As Jim Elliot, a former missionary wrote so many years ago, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Victory Step #4: Proclaim Him - **PRAISE**

There are two kinds of people in the world, **givers** and **takers**. Givers love to serve and takers love being served. Givers overtax themselves, while takers overtax their relationships. As Christian workers, we tend to be strong givers, except in this area of personal quiet time. From God we seek blessing, empowerment, and inspiration, yet often omit offering adoration and thanksgiving, which makes for a very one-sided relationship. **Not good!** We often focus on our needs rather than giving back to God. When we take time to thank Him for His many blessings, we worship Him or give Him pleasure. Worship is giving God what is rightfully His. **Psalm 29:2** says, “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name.” If you want to deepen your relationship with God, don’t forget to praise Him!

Victory Step #5: Practice the Presence - **PONDER**

Let the Word of Christ *dwell in you richly (read Colossians 3:16)*. When your quiet time is done, is your communion with God over? Brother Lawrence, a 17th century monk, believed that set times of prayer should be no different than other times. Activity did not divert him from God; rather, it aided him in controlling any wandering and useless thoughts. Lawrence’s very countenance was edifying, for his life was a continual exercise of love. Even undesirable tasks had significance when accomplished with a prayer-filled mind. Practicing the presence of God allowed him to pass through life joyfully. To practice the presence of God, people have found it helpful to write a key verse or thought on a card to carry with them during the day. They have found that talking to God about and during the mundane activities of their day reminds them of His presence and allows them to serve with joy. Listening to inspirational music or choosing specific objects to prompt prayer or thanksgiving reminds them to ponder the things of God instead of wandering from them.

Seek Him with all of Your Heart

Communing with God is not natural, it is a divine, lofty, yet realistic goal. God promises that we will seek and find Him when we seek Him with all our hearts (Jer. 29:13). I hope you are encouraged that you are not alone, and victory is possible, even promised. So, don’t hit that snooze bar and miss out on the blessings God has for you. He is waiting to meet with you today.

How to have a quiet time with God - part 1

In any relationship, we grow closer through sharing time with one another. The same is true with God. Here is how to develop a regular habit of spending time with God.

Maybe you're motivated to spend time with God, but you don't know how to make the most of it. There are four essential elements of a good quiet time: **Start** with the proper attitudes, **Select** a specific time, **Choose** a special place, **Follow** a simple plan.

In God's eyes, why we do something is far more important than what we 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" (**read 1 Samuel 16:7**).

WHEN YOU COME TO GOD, YOU NEED THESE RIGHT ATTITUDES:

EXPECTANCY. Come before God with anticipation, expecting to have a good time of fellowship and receive a blessing from your time together. This is what David expected: "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you" (**read Psalm 63:1; see also Psalm 42:1**).

ALERTNESS. Remember that you are meeting with the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Redeemer of mankind. Be thoroughly rested and alert. The best preparation for a morning quiet time begins the night before. Get to bed early so you can give God your full attention in the morning.

WILLINGNESS TO OBEY. This attitude is crucial: You don't come to your quiet time to choose what you will or won't do, but with the purpose of doing anything and everything God wants you to do. Jesus said, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (**read John 7:17**). So come to meet the Lord having already chosen to do his will no matter what.

SELECT A SPECIFIC TIME TO SPEND WITH JESUS!

Decide in advance when and for how long your quiet time should be. The general rule is this: The ideal 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.

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" (**read Mark 1:35**).

In the Bible many godly men and women rose early to meet with God. Some of these were Abraham, Job, Jacob, Moses, Hannah, and David. Whatever time you set, be consistent in it. Schedule it on your calendar; make an appointment with God as you would with anyone else. Make a date with Jesus! Then make sure you keep it at all costs. How much time you spend is a matter to be decided between you and the Lord. If a quiet time is new to you, start out slow (15 min), but aim eventually to spend not less than 20 minutes to 30 minutes a day with God.



Lesson 6

Your prayer life and your alone time with God

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How to have a quiet time with God - part 2

CHOOSE A SPECIAL PLACE

Where you have your quiet time is just as important as when. The Bible indicates that Abraham had a regular place where he met with God (**read Genesis 19:27**). Jesus had a custom of praying in the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. “Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him” (**read Luke 22:39**).

Your place ought to be a secluded place, somewhere you can be alone, where it’s quiet, and where you will not be disturbed or interrupted. This may take some ingenuity, but it is necessary. It ought to be a place ... **Where you can** pray aloud without disturbing others. **Where you have** good lighting for reading your Bible or devotional book (a desk, perhaps). **Where you are** comfortable. (Bed is not a good choice. That’s too comfortable!) Wherever you choose, make it a sacred place—a place you set aside to meet each day with the Lord of the universe.

FOLLOW A SIMPLE PLAN

You’ll need a general plan to make your quiet time successful, but the main rule is this: Keep your plan simple. Don’t let it detract from your time with Christ. Below are several points for a workable quiet time. You will need the following three items: **A Bible**—a contemporary translation (not a paraphrase) with good print, preferably without notes. **A notebook**—for writing down what the Lord shows you and for making a prayer list. **A hymnbook / or praise music CD**—in case you sometimes want to sing in your praise time (**read Colossians 3:16**).

Relax and wait on God. Be still and quiet for a minute to put yourself in a reverent mood. Follow God’s admonition: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10; see also Isaiah 30:15, 40:31).

Request that God cleanse your heart and guide you into the time together. Here’s a great Scripture to memorize: “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). You must be in tune with the Author of the Book before you can understand what he wrote.

Read a section of the Scripture. 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 race through it... **Repeatedly**, until you start to picture it in your mind. The reason some people don’t get more out of their Bible reading is that they do not read this way... **Without stopping.** Remember that your goal here is not to gain information, but to feed on the Word and get to know Christ better.

Read it Aloud but quietly. This helps you concentrate on and understand what you’re reading. Read softly enough, however, so that you don’t disturb anyone.



Lesson 6

Your prayer life and your alone time with God

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How to have a quiet time with God - part 3

Read it Systematically. Read through one book at a time in orderly fashion—not using the “random dip” method—a passage here, a chapter there. Read the Bible as it was written—a book or letter at a time.

To get the 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 the sweep of the total revelation.

Reflect and Remember. 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.”

Record what God has shown you. When God speaks to you through his Word, record what you have discovered. Writing it down enables you both to remember what God revealed to you and to check up on your biblical discoveries.

Request from God through a time of prayer. After God has spoken to you through his Word, speak to him in prayer. This is your part of the conversation with the Lord.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Keep your quiet time fresh with these tips:

Vary your plan. From time to time change your methods. Don't fall into the trap of performing a method instead of getting to know Christ.

Sometimes when prayer seems hard and heavy, spend your whole quiet time just thanking God for who he is and what he has done. In Psalm 145 the psalmist asked nothing for himself. Or just sing some songs of praise to God. Spend a whole quiet time in Scripture memory. Let God speak to you in this special and challenging way.

Remember your main purpose: to get to know Christ. Don't let your quiet time become a legalistic exercise in “doing your duty.” Remember that you are there to meet Jesus Christ and get to know him.

May the Lord Jesus Christ help you establish your prayer life and your alone time with Him.

Pastor John Ogden

Why Pray? part 1

by Pastor Jim Cymbala

Sometimes a Christian may wonder, *Why Pray?*

This reveals more about his spiritual condition than any uncertainty of biblical doctrine on prayer. Yet it's good for Christians to understand why prayer is commanded by God.

Prayer sustains our spiritual health by securing God's presence and grace for our lives, just as breathing brings life-sustaining oxygen to our physical bodies.

As Moses explained in **Deuteronomy 4:7**, God draws near with blessing and power when His people pray. Faced with the daunting task of overcoming more powerful enemy forces, Israel had to pray. Only the Lord's help could avert defeat and His assistance was contingent upon sincere, faith-filled prayer. This principle was basic for the Hebrew nation. The high moments in Israel's history were typically related to God's response to their prayers. Likewise, the nation's decline was connected to their refusal to seek His direction.

A careful reading of 2,000 years of religious history reveals identical patterns for the church. Prayer precedes revival and expansion, while the lack of prayer hinders the kingdom of God on earth.

On a personal level, **Christians who spend time with God in prayer are often blessed with spiritual vigor and effectiveness in service**. Prayerless believers and congregations – rarely see lives transformed. It is God's presence and power that make Christianity vital, and that depends on this New Testament command: *"Come near to God and He will come near to you"* (**read James 4:8**).

WE NEED HIM

The first great challenge in establishing a life of prayer is to feel our need for God.

Without the inward conviction (the work of the Holy Spirit) that we must have the Lord's help on a daily basis, we'll rarely pray. Although mercy and grace are freely offered at His throne (**read Hebrews 4:16**), it is only the hungry and thirsty who take advantage of God's provision.

We need to see our condition apart from God's grace and power. As we sense our need of God's Spirit, we will be inspired to draw near to the Lord.

Continue next page!

Why Pray? part 2

by Pastor Jim Cymbala

SECURITY THROUGH PRAYER

We must also remember that it's "prayer offered in faith" (read James 5:15) that brings answers from God. Too many see prayer as a kind of divine lottery, where people might hit the winning number if they are lucky. Not so!

This is not the way our loving Father would have us approach Him with our needs. God has promised to answer our petitions. **If we take the time to read and digest His promises and commands, they will produce strong faith for powerful, breakthrough prayer.**

Polls taken among believers reveal an overall decline in church growth and spiritual life. Why is that? Statistics concerning divorce among Christians and the lack of godliness in personal lifestyles are disheartening. It's pride, self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction and spiritual blindness that make us wonder whether time spent in prayer is really worthwhile.

Who else can change the spiritual landscape but God? And how will the Lord visit us unless we pray with confidence that, "he rewards those who earnestly seek him?" (read Hebrews 11:6)

Let us follow the example of Christ and His disciples.

Let us pray.

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Review Questions - Lesson 6

1. If we are not seeking true intimacy with God in our alone times, then what mistake are we bound to make ? p.45

2. What concept is not often popular in a Christian's life when it comes to praying and having alone time with God ? p. 46

3. Explain what a one sided relationship looks like when it comes to prayer and alone time? p.47

4. Briefly explain what proper attitudes we must have prior to entering into our prayer time and our alone time with God? p.48

5. When choosing a special place to have your alone time and prayer, what would not be a good choice? p.49

6. What is the first great challenge in establishing a life of prayer? p.51

7. What will happen in our alone time and prayer If we take the time to read and digest His promises and commands? p.52

God Bless you in your alone time with God and