

“YOUR DAILY QUIET TIME”

(Psalms 5:3)

A deep-sea diver would not think of going down into the water without first making sure that his air hose was connected so that he could get oxygen from above. And a Christian should not enter into the temptations and duties of the day without first making certain that his connections with heaven are clear and solid.

I. The **PRIORITY** of the daily quiet time. You always have time for the things that are most important to you. It is not really a question of time, but of values. The quiet time is more than a commendable practice; it is absolutely vital to a life of sustained spirituality, effectiveness and love. It is the barometer of the Christian life. Personally, I offer you little hope of living a life of victory in Christ unless you are successful in maintaining a daily quiet time.

II. The **PLACE** for it. Jesus spoke of this place as your prayer “closet” (Matt. 6:6). It should be, if possible, the most secluded, least cluttered, most comfortable, and most conducive spot in your setting. It should be well-lighted, and be furnished with at least a chair.

III. The **PERIOD** for it. The rule should be to “have enough time to forget time.” Prayer is *a time exposure to God*. Prayer is to secure our adjustment to God, not to seek God’s adjustment to us. George Muller said, “A believer’s first responsibility with each new day is to bring his own soul into a happy relationship before God.” The goal should be to seek God’s face each day before you see the face of any man. You are reserving the most strategic part of your day for this purpose. This is your “briefing session in the Captain’s Room.” Everything else is vain without this. The principle of first fruits should be observed here. The first fruits of your substance, the first day of the week, and the first hour of the day should belong to God. “My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up” (Ps 5:3). “It’s infinitely better to pray for help early than it is to yell for help late.” Just as the manna was to be gathered in the morning, so should the treasures of the spiritual life be gathered in the morning. We don’t depend on the good meals we had last week or last year for our physical strength today. We must take time to eat every day to maintain strength and good health. You should determine right now that, just as you don’t expect to spend a day between now and your death without food, so you will not spend a single day in this life without meeting with God for spiritual nourishment. No one can begin the day well, go on well, or end up well, who fails to make provision for this quiet time with God.

A cavalry officer in the Civil War was pursued by a large force of enemy soldiers. His soldiers back at the line kept urging him, “Hurry! They’re gaining!” But the officer discovered that his saddle girth was loosening. Coolly the officer dismounted in the field, tightened the buckle on the saddle girth, then remounted and galloped to safety behind his line. The broken buckle would have left him on the field a prisoner. Stopping to repair the problem allowed him to go on amid the cheers of his army. The Christian who is in such a hurry that he neglects the time alone with God rides the battlefield with a broken buckle. Defeat and disaster are likely coming.

In a Spanish art gallery, there is a painting which shows a laborer ploughing a field with a plough attached to a yoke of oxen. He has completed half the field, but he has gotten into a fresh furrow and knelt on his knees. His eyes are closed, and his hands are folded in prayer. Back in the distant background may be seen the spire of a church, which apparently has rung out the call to prayer. But there is something the laborer doesn't know. As he is on his knees, an angel from heaven has descended from the skies, picked up his plough, has completed one row, and is turning the oxen to plough the next row. Under the picture there is this caption: *NO TIME LOST*. When a person takes time to meet with God, he does not lose time — *he gains eternity*.

IV. The **PARTS** of it. These materials are indispensable: at least two good translations of the Bible (New American Standard Version, Amplified Bible, New International Version, Living Bible paraphrase, Phillips paraphrase of the New Testament, and the King James Version are good possibilities to select from); a good daily devotional book (there are many; consult your pastor about a selection); a journal for notations; a prayer list; and a globe or manageable map of the world. Other materials are optional.

V. The **PROCEDURE** to follow. Get quiet enough to switch from your normal active, aggressive mood into a passive, receptive mood. Come before God with expectancy. Practice the "open hand" policy. First, open your hand and turn the palm *down*, picturing the *emptying* of your life. Then, turn the palm *up*, picturing your willingness to receive whatever God may want to give. Pause to be reminded of His Presence and His Promise (Heb. 13:5 & Ex. 34:2, as examples). Practice creative, focused silence. Be like King David, who went in and sat before the Lord" (II Sam. 7:18).

"Hold up your heart, dear child, for God to fill;
He doesn't say, Be strong; He says, "Be still."

Concentrate on Jesus. Begin with a brief prayer, such as Psalm 119:18, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I might behold wondrous things out of Thy Word." Read the Scriptures (audibly, if possible). Read them the way you would picture a lover reading a love-letter from his beloved. Remember that every day you have the honor of sitting down with a book that contains the words of the One who created you, and who loved you enough to pay an infinite price to have a relationship with you. Go into the Holy of Holies each day, spread your Bible there on the Mercy Seat, and read it in the light of the bright Shekinah of God's Presence. Then pray the passage in paraphrase back to God. My mother used to say, "It is impolite to change the subject when someone is talking to you." How much more impolite if we change the subject on God! (Check the prayers at the end of a typical church service by this standard. God has just spoken through a message from His Word, and we often pray our own rote prayers which focus a million miles from His address). Pray God's truth back to Him until His will becomes your will at all points of His address to you. Listen as a lover to his beloved, and talk as a child to his father. It is wise to take notes on any message you hear from God or about God, and then pray back over it. Then, read the selection for that day from the daily devotional book, letting God speak through it. Then, engage in specific prayer, possibly following the acrostic, **A C T S**: **A** for adoration, a response to the *greatness* of God; **C** for confession, a response to the *holiness* of God; **T** for thanksgiving, a response to the *goodness* of God; and **S** for supplication, a response

to the *generosity* of God. As you conclude this time with God, ask Him to allow you to carry the awareness of His Presence and His revealed will with you all through the day.

William Blake, the puzzling poet, wrote,

“I give you the end of a golden string,
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven’s gate,
Inside Jerusalem’s wall.”

If Blake’s poem is intended to be about salvation, then it is both false and misleading. But if it can be used as a quiet time formula, it will serve to remind us that the discipline of the quiet time is as nothing compared to the delight of its rewards.

VI. The **PURPOSE** of it. In the burning bush story of Exodus 3, it was only after Moses “turned aside” to see this unusual sight that God revealed Himself to him. The quiet time is for the purpose of “turning aside” to meet with God. The primary purpose of the quiet time is not for gathering principles or gleaning spiritual produce, but to cultivate relationship with a Person, to have a heart occupied with Christ. It is to cultivate a spiritual romance with Him, in the truest sense of the word romance. Elizabeth O’Connor said, “We are called first of all to belong to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and to keep our lives warmed at the hearth of His life.” “The Bible is not as much exposure to precepts as it is an encounter with a Person.” The greatest incentive to the practice of the daily quiet time is not to get your needs met; it is to look away from all else and unto Jesus (Heb. 12:2, and especially II Cor. 3:18). Spend your life mastering II Cor. 3:18, which is, to me, the greatest motto verse in the Bible in understanding the Christian life and its practical implementation.

An anointed preacher was asked by an admirer, “Where did you attend school?” The preacher answered, “I went to Mary’s College.” “Mary’s College?” the enquirer asked. “Where is Mary’s College?” “It is in the thirty-ninth verse of Luke chapter ten,” the preacher replied, “which says that ‘Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard His word.’” The best theology degree in the world is gained in “Mary’s College”!

There was a day in Napoleon’s life in which disaffection had arisen in his men, and mutiny was threatened. Napoleon sat alone in a little room with two doors. Into one door came his men, one by one, and Napoleon clasped the hand of each and looked him full in the face for a passionate moment. The problem was over. Our Commander, Jesus, is summoning us to Himself, one by one. He wants to look us full in the face and let us feel the gentle love-pressure of His nail-pierced hand. We should envision this reality in each daily quiet time. Let each encounter with God be a time of transparent dialogue, remembering that “The Lord is with you, while you are with Him” (II Chronicles 15:2, RSV).

VII. The **PROTECTION** of it. Remember the principle: what counts costs! You will find that the most vicious attacks of the adversary will be directed toward robbing you of your daily time with God. You may not appreciate this time fully, but Satan does! You will have to guard it fearlessly if you are to keep it. It will need to be guarded from: your own delinquencies,

distractions, drowsiness, dispositional deficiencies, and other enemies. Samuel Logan Brengle, the successor to William Booth as the Commanding General of the Salvation Army, said, “I have only one temptation in ministry — it’s the temptation to want to do something for God each day, before I’ve first spent time with Him.” This temptation must be resisted as the most deadly of all temptations.

In the economy of God, “go hide thyself” (I Kings 17:3) comes before “go show thyself” (I Kings 18:1). Effective public ministry will only follow efficient private ministry. L. Nelson Bell said, “Don’t keep forever on the public road. Leave the beaten path for a short time each day and drive into the woods. Then you will be refreshed for the rest of the journey, even if you are facing a hard drive to your destination.” If we hide ourselves daily in the Presence of God, we will fare well in the encounters with the Ahabs of life. If not, we must “sponsor ourselves” — and take the losses!

Dr. Raymond Edman was speaking to Wheaton College chapel about how we should prepare to meet with God, when suddenly he slumped onto the pulpit, fell to the floor...and entered into the Presence of the King! How would we approach tomorrow morning’s quiet time if we knew we would actually die while in it — and *actually enter face-to-face into the King’s Presence?* One day we will meet together in the King’s Presence. Let’s make sure that we are not on unfamiliar territory or in strange company when that day comes!