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Believer's Life Style: The Quiet Time

If somebody brought you a brand new Christian, what would you teach him? This is a crash presentation to examine possible themes that might be used in building curriculum or creating curriculum for fulfilling the commission of Jesus to go everywhere among all nations and to make disciples, and necessarily disciple makers from among all men. We've looked at our series thus far at the curriculum subject or theme "the assurance of salvation," or the security of the believer in Christ. Then, we spent a second session looking at the Believer's Identity and Inventory. In other words, who I am in Christ and what I have because I am in Christ.

The Secret of a Powerful Christian Life

Now today, we are going to look at one of the very most indispensable themes or subjects, indeed, activities -- functions -- in a believer's life: the matter of the individual's daily quiet time. Or, as it has been called, your daily appointment with God. Others have called it the morning watch. It is simply the believer's daily devotional life, an absolutely indispensable aspect of spiritual life. In fact, the secret of a powerful Christian life launches in an individual's daily quiet time. The secret of a powerful Christian work launches both in the individual quiet time and in the corporate power represented by the corporate quiet times of all the Christian's involved. And, the secret of a powerful church is the same thing. They all launch from the individual's personal quiet time or daily devotional life with God.

The Secret of a Powerful Church

Some years ago, I was in a powerful little church in another state, not far away, and I had thought I had gone to lead the church in spiritual special services called revival (that's a fox). And I found to my amazement that I was actually there to be blessed more than I was to be a blessing. We had a number of people saved, we had lives changed, we had Christian's lives change, but most importantly was what happened to me. I saw a very, very, powerful small church where great miracles took place in service, after service, after service -- the things that would be hard to explain from a mere human standpoint. Things that would require God as an explanation for. And, I was talking with the pastor one afternoon and he said "would you like to see the primary secret," and I said "I sure would." And so that afternoon he took me over to a prayer service where two older Christian ladies were praying as they did every day. They had come out to that church when it had its first beginnings to help form its foundation and had remained. And they had disciplined the people at large, the most of the people, in the matter of having a daily powerful quiet time.

In every home I went in that week I looked around upon cue -- I was told what to look for:

- I found a small desk somewhere inside the door,
- I found a little stack of books on the corner of that desk,
- I found a Bible,
- I found a notebook that had a prayer list and devotional thoughts that were gleaned from the daily reading every day,

and I was told that this was the secret of the power of the church, and my life became entirely changed. I had had something of a daily quiet time, but it became much more structured -- to advantage -- in a good way, it became much more powerful from that point on, and I want to tell you, basically, for over 40 years, with very few interruptions, I have had a quiet time essentially at the same time every morning with some interruptions because of schedule and other demands. And if not at that time, then usually some other time during the day, every day. And I can tell you that I do not believe a person can have a viable, vital Christian life without a daily quiet time. So I want to explore with you some aspects of the daily devotional life or what others have called "the morning watch."

Dimensions of a Daily Quiet Time

As a curriculum matter, both for being a disciple and for building disciples, when I take on a disciple individually (that is, when God assigns him to me as my responsibility to build that person into a useful Christian) and I begin to teach him the matter of a quiet time, I do two or three things:

- I teach him theoretically what it means to have one -- in other words, I give him a theology and

a systematized statement of how to do it. But more importantly,

■ I try to go at least one time a week over to his house, early morning or whenever he has his quiet time, and I meet with him to have quiet time with him to model to him how to do it, and after several weeks I let him then launch himself and show me how he's doing it, and I simply supervise from that point on.

■ And then, I think it's wise occasionally to go back over once every six weeks or once every 3 months just to be sure, because the greatest tendency after a person begins to have it is to drift. And the greatest veteran Christian can drift in the matter of a quiet time.

So I want to explore some dimensions of it with you today. Every key word we are going to use begins with the letter "P". So again, I am going to give you a series of English "Ps", and I hope they are sweet Ps:

1. Priority

Biblical Reason. I want you to think first of the priority of having a daily quiet time. Here is the Biblical rationale or the Biblical reason for it. It's stated in Romans 11:16, which in the King James Bible says:

For if the firstfruit is holy, so is the lump; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.

Let me read that to you in a different translation:

When the first handful of dough is consecrated, then the whole batch is consecrated with it.

Biblical Law. And this is a Biblical law: that when you give the first of any succession of things to God, you are by that act, sanctifying the entire succession of things. For example, when the children of Israel went into the land of promise, God required that they surrender the first city captured in the land to Him in token of the fact that every portion of the land was His by right, and they were surrendering, through the token, the entire land into the hands of God. The same thing is true of first fruits. When the first fruits of a person's resources -- his income -- are surrendered to God, that betokens the fact that his entire resources and belongings actually are in God's ownership.

In other words, when I give a tithe, the first tenth sanctifies ten tenths. It is not the usual Baptist idea that if I give God one tenth that He is stay off of my nine tenths. No, it is rather, instead of bribing God with one tenth, I give one tenth in token of the fact that all of my resources belong to Him, and not a penny is to be used in any way except in a way that would advance His interest in the earth.

Biblical Requirement. The same thing is true in the Biblical requirement of the Sabbath day in the Old Testament and the first day of the week in the New Testament. The idea is that when I surrender the first day of the week to God, then the entire week is surrendered to God in a token of that first day. And the same thing is true as I give the first hour of each day to God. If I do not give the first hour, then I violate the principle of first things committed to God betokening the fact that everything thereafter belongs to Him because I had surrendered to Him the first thing.

Biblical Practice. Now, it is interesting to see how the Bible writers, and the saints or the Christian's in the Bible, or the believer's in God in the Old Testament, how they invariably practiced this. For example, in high profile, is Jesus himself. In Mark 1:35 we read these words:

And in the morning, rising up a great while before day while it was still dark, He went out and departed into a solitary place and there He prayed.

Now I'm convinced that if the Son of God did that, that's a good standard for me to follow. And if it was necessary, as it apparently was for him to have a quiet time, then it is certainly indispensable and essential that I have a daily quiet time.

Let me give you an Old Testament example. In the book of Daniel, chapter 6, verse 10, and let me immediately address the excuse most people use: "but I don't have time, my time gets crowded." I want to remind you that Daniel was the prime minister of a vast sprawling pagan empire. A man of God, elevated to high position, and he functioned through one king after another, one rumor after another, and stood in that position for many, many, many years. Yet, listen to these words:

Three times a day he got down on his knees, and prayed,
giving thanks to his God.

Now it's amazing how humanistic procedure makes us forfeit that thinking that somehow if we could put our best minds together and connive in the best conceivable way we can come up with proper answers. Well dear friends, it never has happened yet, it won't begin with us, it will never occur, because we voting against God no matter how much we connive and how brilliant our intelligence is that we make composite in address of the problem. No, the solution is found in a relationship with God. You see, all that happens in my life with God is closely connected with my daily quiet time.

Now listen carefully. God knows that; I know that; and it becomes even more important in some cases Satan knows that. And he will do anything to prevent the priority of a daily quiet time. So if you are going to have one, you are going to have to set yourself immediately, bowing your back against all resistance and simply determine to have it. Because Satan will do anything to prevent it.

2. Place

Now let me talk about a second word that begins with the letter "P." Let me talk about having a regular place for your daily quiet time. Matthew 6:6 refers to this as your "prayer closet." Jesus said when you pray enter into your closet and that presumably means a quiet place shut off from all possible traffic and conducive to relationship with God where you genuinely can pray. He calls this your prayer closet. And notice he did not say to his people, "If you pray." He presumed that a Christian will pray or he is backslidden. He said, "When you pray, enter into your closet and when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who sees and hears in secret, and your Father will reward you."

Let me make some very practical suggestions. I would strongly suggest that you have one given place for this. For years and years now, I have varied the places over the years, but usually there is a long period of time where I have it only in one place. For years I have had my quiet time in one place, normally either in my home or, weather permitting, very close thereby. I think, though that one place is advisable, it should be occasionally adjusted. I think it's wise to get up and walk during your quiet time for a brief period of time. It's wise to change locations for a brief period of time, even if you go back to the old standard location in order that you realize that this is a romance relationship and it is not simply that you meet with God at this given place. You are simply carrying on the spiritual eternal romance in this given place like a love seat in your house where lovers meet, but it does not mean that you do not love each other in every place and every other occasion. I would suggest that your place be very private, it be as undisturbed as possible, it be comfortable enough though not overly comfortable. I would not recommend at all that you have your quiet time in bed, or your quiet time will become sack religion, you will fall asleep while you are doing it. And I would recommend that it be a place as conducive of as possible with quiet, passive, serene surroundings and perhaps with spiritual suggestions, pictures on the wall, things like that suggests your walk with God.

On one occasion when I was in a home in a city in another state and I spent the night there. I got up early the next morning and was all alone in the den, seated on the end of the couch and I had turned the over-hanging lamp on and was seated there reading my Bible taking notes having my quiet time when the lady, my hostess came out of their bed room dressed in a gown and a robe, and she came in sashing the robe and she said, "Oh Brother Herb, that's not the light you should be reading by." She said, "That's the courting light," and I realized what she meant. This was one of those lights that you turn and it has three levels of illumination and I was operating by the first turn and this is what she called the courting light. I called her by name and I said, "will you

kindly say that again?" She said, "oh that's the courting light." I said, "that's exactly what I'm doing." I wish I could be convinced always that I am in a love relationship with the greatest person in the universe and it is actually a spiritual romance in the truest sense in which he loves me and I love him and we court one another in this eternal romance day after day. It requires normally a given and particular place.

3. Period of Time

Then there is a third word that begins with the letter "P." I would strong suggest that you set aside one particular given period of time that you honor every day for this relationship with God. And I would say that Biblically early in the day, whatever that may be for you, early in the day is preferable, by that I mean that if you arise at ten o'clock in the morning, your first thirty minutes or hour should be devoted from ten to eleven to your relationship with God. If you arise at six in the morning, then from six to seven. If you arise at four in the morning, then from four to five. If you don't get up until noon, early is preferable whatever early may mean to you. That means at the beginning of your day, whenever your day may begin. The reason I say that is that there are some people who resent anybody being awake before noon. They just don't do anything productive before noon. But if your day starts at noon, spend the first hour or near by, now if you have some chores you have to do first of course that is a given, but right at the beginning and with meticulous protection set this time aside for God. The Psalmist said it this way, Psalm five verse three, he said my voice shalt thou hear in the morning O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee and will look up, now here is the principle behind that; you ought to set it as your goal to seek God's face before you see the face of any man. Now if you quickly see another human face, then before you ever arise out of bed you ought to say your good morning hello's to God and determine to see his face previous to the seeing of any other face. In other word you should go into the closet with God before you go into the conflict with the flesh, the world, and the devil, because if you go into the conflict before you go into the closet not matter when you later go into it your unprepared for the conflict you have gone into. Remember, your reserving the most important and strategic part of the day for your relationship with the most important person there is. That's why I call this session my briefing session, where I get my orders every day, I avow and confirm my love for him and simply report in quite often to say, Jesus your good at loving, i need to be loved right now, so let me just let you love me for a while. Let's both do what he is good at. I need to be loved so you love me for a little while. If you can't start any other way, you can at least start like that. I have a pastor friend who not far from here was asked to come down to the city council meeting of the city and lead the opening prayer that convened the session one morning. They gave him a stationary microphone outside the wall that separated the observers from the council members and he stood out there and presumably they bowed their heads when the chairman asked them to have the opening prayer and when he finished, when he said amen, the chairman then said, now let's get down to the business of the day. That was little more than my pastor friend could take, he turned back to the microphone, asked for the microphone again and said, sir you may not realize it but you just did the business of the day, you will never do anything more important today than you did when we bowed our heads and I called on the Lord Almighty for his attention and blessing to be upon you and your adjustment to be made to him today. How wise were those words and how unwise were the words of the moderated or the man who presided over the council meeting that day because no matter what else you may do if you do not do this business, all other is in vain as far as reality and eternity are concerned. If you do this, you may do a lot of stumbling in the other, but God will rescue most stumblings and will credit the desires of your heart as being reality even though you may stumble all the way home. So, be sure that you give priority to this and you have a given period of time.

Let me make another suggestion at this point. I would suggest that you set a time minimum. I don't believe that anybody could get the sounds of the earth out of his ear and the sounds of heaven into his ears, the sights of earth out of his eyes, the sights of heaven into his eyes in less than thirty minutes. Now I would concede if somebody says that he might have less than that and if you can't have any more time than that, then certainly take the time you have and if you have less than that take the time you have. I know a woman who called a cab one day, left the presence of six children, her own children, and went out and climbed out in the cab and the driver waited for orders and she sat in the back seat and he said where are we going and she said I'm not going any where I just want to sit here put my apron on my head and talk to God a few minutes and I will pay you for the time you've spent here. How wise if you can't get it any other way.

Now another principle. You ought to have enough time to forget time. In other words, don't be dominated by time when you have your quiet time. If you are always worried about the next page that you are going to read or the next phone call you are going to have to make or the next assignment you have you are not going to have much quality with God. So have enough time to forget time and if you can't have enough time at that moment arrange it during the day where you can set aside enough time to forget time so you can give God time of day. I would strongly suggest also that you keep this appointment regularly and here is the reason: prayer is simply no more no less than a time exposure to God. It is not a utilitarian thing where we get things from God, that is a bonus by-product, all of us know about unanswered prayers and some of us know about answered prayers but it may happen and it may not. That's not the purpose of prayer. Prayer is not for us to get God to adjust to us, it's rather for us to adjust to God. It's the difference between rowing a boat to shore and rowing the shore to the boat. Many people pray as if they are rowing God to their purposes instead of rowing themselves to God's purpose and God's person.

Andrew Murray said it like this, now listen very carefully, I doubt that I will say anything more important than this quote in this entire session, so listen very carefully. "A believer's very first responsibility in each day is to bring his own soul into a happy condition before God." Now I want to do you a favor and read that again, "a believer's very first responsibility each day is to bring his own soul into a happy condition before God." Do you realize that would take away all negativisms out of Christian, fears would be relieved, resentments would be gone, cynicism would not dominate our lives, complaints and criticisms all those would be removed immediately if we would exercise that first responsibility each day to bring our own souls into a happy condition before God before we do anything else in the remainder of that day.

4. Parts of the Quiet Time

So we've looked at the priority of the quiet time, the period for the quiet time, the place for the quiet time, now let me talk about the parts of the quiet time. I'll just make some suggestions here, you may vary them as you see best for your relationship with God.

1. *Use Scripture.* Obviously number one you must use scripture and honor it seriously and solemnly as the word of God and I would strongly suggest that you use the Bible the way it is written. Read it systematically. If you don't read all the way through from Genesis one to Revelation twenty two twenty one at least read the book you have selected systematically if it be the gospel of John or the minor prophet Amos, read it from front to back. Don't use the skip and dip method where you dip into a text, let the Bible fall open and just skip like mountain bird skimming over a mountain lake, just taking your choice about what you are going to get or to let chance and comprise dictate the choice of what you are going to get. No do the honor of reading the Bible the way it was written. Read it systematically.

Now if you have never done this before let me suggest that you start perhaps with the Gospel of John, maybe with the Gospel of Mark. If you read the Gospel of John first read it at least two or three times before you read any other book in the Bible. I think that will explain itself as you read along. It clearly tells you why it was written and if that purpose is not fulfilled then all the other reading in the Bible will do no good. So read the gospel of John which is fathomless, unfathomable in its riches and depth. Read it several times before you read anything else. You might want to read the activistic account of the life of Christ as the suffering servant in the gospel of Mark and then perhaps one of the other gospels. But begin with scripture and I would strongly suggest the annual through the Bible plan. I would strongly suggest that annual through the Bible plan, reading plan, if you don't know one or have one let someone recommend one who knows one or has one so that you can read systematically instead of just reading it half hazard and random and comprise through the Bible.

2. *Significant planned silence.* I would suggest also that a second part of your quiet time should be significant planned silence. Let me give you a standard for this, II Samuel 7:18 then King David went in and sat before the Lord. In other words you determine that this silence is a creed in relationship with God where you simply sit consciously, very consciously, very openly before him with directed thinking, simply telling him I want you to speak to me, I want you to speak clearly and I want to listen in this silence only for

your voice and cultivate relationship with you.

3. *Supplication or seeking God in conscious, even audible prayer.* I would suggest that a third part of your quiet time should be supplication or seeking God in conscious, even audible prayer. Now these are some of the parts, I'll mention other parts as we overlap into other significant segments of this discussion of the quiet time.

5. Paraphernalia of the Quiet Time

Let me give you a fifth thing, a fifth errand, that's the paraphernalia of the quiet time or the materials to be used. Let me just make a quick successive list or a list in succession of possible materials to use in a viable quiet time.

1. *Bible.* Obviously, a Bible and several translations of the Bible. Now if you are unfamiliar with Bible translations get your pastor or some more advanced disciple, some growing Christian to help you in understanding the difference between one translation and another. My favorite Bible translations are the Amplified Bible, and be sure that you know how to read it is a gold mine of wealth spiritually and in parting God's word, then the Discovery Bible and read the first ten pages of introduction before you ever read a line of the Bible then you'll know what those things mean in the text as you are advancing through it and get at least two good Bible paraphrases, for the New Testament my favorite is Phillips Paraphrase which is actually a commentary translation paraphrase on the text and it is very alive. J.B. Phillips said when he translated it was like putting a wire into old main that he thought had been disconnected but he found it very much electrically alive, when he touched the Bible with that more modern paraphrase. And then another favorite is The Living Bible which is a paraphrase and that must be explained it's not a translation word for word but is a very live paraphrase. In fact one of the most anointed meetings I ever attended in my life was led by a man who read out of nothing but The Living Bible and I kept sitting there wondering what is that translation he is reading out of, it is powerful, and he read segment after segment out of The Living Bible and when I found out what it was I went immediately and started in my own quiet time through The Living Bible knowing it's a paraphrase but it is a powerful paraphrase and will in an up to date modern way help you to understand what the old archaic King James language may not assist you in understanding. So get several Bible translations.

2. *Prayer List.* Employ your own prayer list. Create a prayer list. If you have to use documentation from other prayer lists or other prayer suggestions or your church prayer calendar, wonderful. I have followed this standard for years, somewhat erratically in and out but none the less followed it; on Monday I let the M stand for men and I pray for God's men, on Tuesday I let the T stand for texts and I pray for my texts, on Wednesday for specific workers. I pray for known workers whom I am aware of in strategic positions doing strategic work for Christ, on Thursday it's a time of thanksgiving, on Friday for my family particularly, now on Saturday for saints and sinners and on Sunday which I spend less time praying in than any other day of the week probably for obvious reasons, on Sunday I pray for the services and the sermons and I would strongly recommend that any Christian do that in behalf of his church and especially his pastor. Now your pastor ought to be included on that list at least in the men of Monday, the workers of Wednesday and the saints of Saturday and the sermon and the services of Sunday. So he ought to be prayed for at least four times a week. Praying God's power upon him and God's protection around him. So you ought to have a prayer list and use it regularly. If it gets to deep then write it up. It will rescue you from the monotony of praying over the same things every day among other advantages.

3. *Devotional Books.* The third thing I would strongly suggest is that you have favorite usable devotional books, for example I brought with me today ----- it is a well worn copy, I've used it for years for several years Streams in the Desert which is to me the best one I've ever used but some people wouldn't agree with that, you just find out what fits you, here is Dr. Sidlow Baxter's tremendous book on Wake My Heart and then the one that is probably a universal favorite among many, but I will tell you in some places it's hard to use is Oswald Chambers tremendous devotional book My Utmost for His Highest. Now you may run into an occasional place in there where it's over your head. I

would simply say to you learn to lift up your head. Don't excuse yourself with that mousy excuse that I didn't understand. Ask yourself what can I do to understand. When you run into a passage let it stretch you. Don't hide in simplicity all your life. If there is anything Jesus was not he was not simple. He dealt with the most complex issues this world has ever known and he could not do it simply. If you look into his teachings carefully you will be staggered again and again how they have tier upon tier, level upon level of understandings. You can get nuggets on the surface but you will never reach the bottom and you should study and study to get deeper and richer in all those for all the days of your life.

I would also suggest Charles Spurgeon's two great books one entitled *Morning and Evening* and the other entitled *Faith's Checkbook*. They are usable documents in which you may use for year after year after year day after day in your daily quiet time.

4. *Hymnal or Sing-Along Music Cassette*. I would suggest also that you have a hymnal or a church hymn book on hand with the greatest songs of Christian history in it. And, it is strongly possible that you should employ a sing-along music cassette somewhere in your quiet time so that you can sing the great songs and great hymns to celebrate. The precedence on this is found many places in the Bible, for example Psalm 59:16 I will sing of your power O Lord yes I will sing aloud of your mercy in the morning. That is only one clue among many. How Christian rob themselves by failing to sing aloud in celebration of God's great person and his purposes and his provisions and his goodness.

5. *Materials*. Let me make a last suggestion about materials. If I were leading any Christian into a daily quiet time today I would say that his materials are not complete without at least *a small map of the world* preferably a globe that he may turn, that he may spin on its axis in his hand a copy of Patrick Johnstone's book *Operation World*. In other words, if the purpose of disciple-being and disciple-making is to impact the world then the first mandate is that we must learn and be intelligent about our world. So I would strongly encourage you to use *Operation World* which is a daily prayer guide for the nations of the world one by one day by day.

For example, when I'm talking to you today, today's reading was on Afghanistan the great mountain country that nestles between Hindu India and all the Hindu and Buddhist lands to the east and then the Islamic world block and form a tremendous cross road for world evangelism with ten million people so it would not be significantly difficult with a voice to evangelize many of them and yet they have never heard the gospel. Most of those people there have never one time heard the name of Jesus. You become aware of this. You learn how to pray over that country. You pray over it for two days on the prayer calendar. That's the twenty fifth and twenty sixth of January. The dates on which I'm talking to you one of those dates and you learn day after day to pray for some segment of your world and thus you become aware of what world impact is all about. That is what disciple-making is ultimately for. So the paraphernalia are the materials to be used.

6. Procedure to Follow

Now number six let me suggest a procedure to follow. I will just give you a running order.

1. *Open your quiet time with a very brief prayer*. For many years erratically and spasmodically but with some degree of regularity I have used one line in scripture Psalm 119:18 Open now mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law or I pray over James chapter one verses five through eight about asking God for wisdom or I pray over Ephesians one verses fifteen through nineteen that he will open the eyes of my understanding my heart so that I may see what is mine in Christ and what my responsibility is as a Christian and learn how to cultivate relationship with him. I have also prayed for years negatively Psalm 28:1 which says be not thou silent unto me O God lest if thou be silent unto me I become like those who go down into the pit, because you see the most dangerous thing that can ever happen to a Christian would occur should God stop talking to him and the most significant thing that ever happens in anybody's life saved or lost is when God speaks to him and it ought to be a daily regular momentary occurrence that God speaks to his child which he is longing to do all day long every day

only interrupted consciously by the mandate that the child of God do other things and then he ought to be aware that God is present and God is speaking and he ought to tune in as quickly as possible to what God is saying.

2. Now a second suggestion: *Read your Bible and even read it audibly.* Let me give you a quote and again it is a very significant quote so listen very carefully, "Bible reading is the listening side of prayer, if the ear side or the listening side is right then the tongue side or the speaking side will necessarily be right and we will learn to pray according to the will of God." Now I can't tell you anything any more important than that so read your Bible even audibly.

3. *Then, pray -- pray throughout, even pausing in your Bible reading to echo back to God what God has said to you.* In fact, the best way to pray is to hear from God and then do not allow yourself to change the subject. Let me make a suggestion here mark passages in your Bible and pray those favorite passages back to God. If you can't do it any other way paraphrase them as you look at the page and transfer them to your own lips and thank God for speaking those to you and ask him to incarnate that in your skin. You see Dr. Price was right when he said the best binding for the Bible is not Morocco leather it's a human skin. So ask God to incarnate in this in you as he did in Jesus modified by your limitations and your sins and your inabilities but as much as God can do it.

4. Another suggestion: *Use the prayer list every day.* Instead of going first to men on God's behalf, go first to God on men's behalf. So we go to the man by way of God's throne of grace instead of going in any other direction any other way which will be basically useless.

Now occasionally I would suggest that you vary the place of your of your quiet time as well as the procedure of your quiet time and the participants. In other words, occasionally have a friend with you a disciple or a discipler or go over to their house or get a group together and have a quiet time together. It will encourage everybody concerned. Do it with at least one other person and even hopefully with a few others because there will be those in that group who have drifted.

I was really amazed and it amazed the pastor even more when I was in a church in a town down in Louisiana, in northwest Louisiana and I asked the pastor if I could ask the people to honestly tell me how long it had been since they had a viable quiet time and it would be in confidence between me and the pastor and that person. They signed their name to a little piece of paper and tell us how long. The most dismaying thing was that one of the leaders of the church, a deacon, confessed that he had not had a viable quiet time for eight years. Now it would be staggering to find out in our churches how the pew potato fixtures in our churches, people who are here and are leading spokesmen in the body do not have a viable time with God every day. That is tragic. It despises the cross of Christ. It deprives the church of Christ and prevents the cause of Christ from the advance God wants it to have. I do not see how anybody can disobey the Bible and call himself a Bible Christian at this point.

7. Principles Behind the Quiet Time

Quickly, let me give you some principles that are behind the quiet time:

1. *The Bible world is the real world.* That is principle number one. I John 2:17 says this world is passing away, but II Corinthians 4:18 says the things which are seen are only temporary, it's the things that are unseen, notice they are real things though they are unseen, it's the things that are unseen that are eternal and when a person spends time alone with God that means he is in constant contact with the ultimate reality that runs parallel with and intertwines with what we call the real world which in reality is passing away.

2. *God ardently desires our daily fellowship.* In John 4:23, Jesus said to the woman at the well in Samaria the hour is coming and now is when the true worshiper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth for the Father is seeking such to worship him. Let it be underscored in your thinking, draw circles around it, high light it every conceivable way, God wants fellowship with you. He is seeking for people who will take time to build

relationship with him. What is the basis of that? Let any good father tell you. Any good father wants to spend time with his children. Sometimes he wants to spend time with all of them in a group corresponding to public worship but often he wants to spend time with each of them individually as you do with God in your quiet time. So there is the second principle, God ardently desires our fellowship. Here is the third principle

3. *We need the quiet time as much as God needs it and more, and as much as we need any thing else we ever have in our lives.* Let me remind you again of Daniel, prime minister of an empire but he had to have those check point times with God where he refreshed himself in God's presence and it made him the mighty man of God in a pagan land who was always consulted for great decisions such as men of God we ought to have in our society today should be.

7. Purpose of the Quiet Time

Let me give you another point, another word that begins with the letter "P." The purpose of the quiet time. Let me give it to you negatively first and again I urge to listen carefully. The quiet time is not for the purpose of primarily gathering principles or gleaning produce such as blessings either from the Bible or for an answer to prayer or whatever, but it is to meet with and cultivate relationship with a person. It is to have heart that is occupied with God himself. It is to behold Jesus in his glory and to allow no distractions to keep us from seeing him.

I heard the account of a young Christian who went to his pastor one day and he said pastor I want to sadly confess that I hear all of these people around here talking about what they are getting out of their daily quiet time. He said it has not produced that for me. I read my Bible and pray seriously and don't seem to be getting anything out of it. What is wrong with me? While he was asking the question the pastor was quietly praying, in what Guy King called the sky telegram prayer. He sent a quick air of prayer up to heaven and said what is the answer to this question. Immediately when the boy flecked the question at end the pastor had his answer. He said son you see that wicker basket on my desk? Yes sir. He said empty the papers out of that wicker basket and the boy did so puzzled and the pastor said now take that wicker basket out into the hall go to the water fountain and bring me back a basket full of water. The boy just stood there puzzled and looked at the basket and looked at the pastor thinking what in the world does this mean. Then he said, "Pastor that basket won't hold water." The pastor said, "Never mind you obey me go out and take it to the water fountain and bring me back a basket of water." The puzzled boy walked away out into the hall went down to the water fountain ran the water into the wicker basket and of course it just spilled through. He came back with a puzzled look on his face, a dismayed look on his face and he said pastor I told you that's crazy that basket won't hold water and the pastor said yes but son the basket is a lot cleaner isn't it.

See, don't worry about what you are getting out of it. I don't check up on my relationship with my wife all the time to see what is happening in that relationship. If I did it would become a very uneasy relationship. I rather presume on growth in that relationship without taking it for granted and I take it for granted without presuming on it. In other words, I cultivate it but I'm not always checking up on it to see if it's occurring. The same thing is true with your relationship with God. So, the purpose is the have cultivating relationship with the Lord Jesus with God the Father with the Holy Spirit.

9. Protection

Let me give you another quote. Now listen very carefully.

If we have only ten minutes to give to God, most of us will say I can't get anything out of ten minutes with God, so we won't spent any time at all. This is the very root of our problem. Rather than seeing time with God as moments with a friend, we see it as time during which we accomplish something or get something only for ourselves. We need to give those minutes rather than say I can't get anything out of them. You see the most important thing God can give you is a relationship with himself through your quiet time. It must be deliberately reserved and it must be carefully kept or you will not have it at all or you will drift out of it.

Now, it wouldn't take much genius to see this. It would be staggering if honesty would force us to admit how many people there are in the church including church leaders every where you have no daily quiet time with God and thus are riding their lives into oblivion for eternity because they do not take the Biblical cue to have a quiet time with God. Do you know what they are like? They are like a diver on the deck of a ship preparing to go down into the deep, he has his diving suit on but he forgets or neglects to connect the air hose. What do you suppose is going to happen to him if that destructive element of that water that is bound to destroy him if it can be given half a chance in that element beneath.

The same thing is true of a Christian. He may fake his way all of the way through but he increases direction and his effort to gain productivity but as far as eternity will be concerned it counts for nothing. What a wonderful day it would be if the church would suddenly stop in it's tracks take it's bearings and Christian everywhere would redetermine to assist each other in having a vital viable daily quiet time using every inter-networking means possible even doing it as groups, having the whole church occasionally to sit down in the morning with breakfast served afterwards and teaching them how to do it.

I'll tell you what I did in my last church, once every three months at least I had a quiet time with my people on Wednesday night, occasionally on Sunday night because there were people there on Sunday night that were not at the Wednesday service and we had large crowds for prayer service and I would go in without a message call for somebody to open his Bible hand me the Bible from the pew where they were sitting and where it's opened I would have a quiet time teaching my people how to do it. In other words, modeling it in front of them so the entire church could be standardized in a consistent pattern of having a daily time with God and beginning to drain the heavens. The very first time at the beginning of a ten pastorate that I preached on a quiet time many people there had never heard of this before in their lives and so I asked in the invitation how many of you would stand pledging yourselves as well as you could do to begin and to continue in the pattern of a daily quiet time. I would say maybe one-fourth of the congregation stood up. I appreciated the honesty and the reluctance of the other three-fourths and then I made a discovery out of that one-fourth.

About a month and a half later I was walking down the hall in the Sunday school time and the lady who had stood up that morning stopped me. She said, "Brother Hodges, when a proposition is made such as you made about having a daily devotional life every morning is made again, I will never again stand to my feet and pledge myself to such a thing as that," and this is a kind gracious woman. I said, "May I ask you why?" She said, "I cannot do it." I said, "On what grounds can you not do it." She said, "I don't know, I simply cannot do it. I took your suggestions got my Bible, got a prayer list, started a prayer list, read a devotional book, brought the devotional book I simply cannot do it." I said, "Let me ask you a question or two. If you want to go to the bank do you have any trouble doing it?" She said, "No, I just go." "If you want to go to the grocery store do you have any trouble doing it?" "No, I just go." I said, "If you want to go and I named a number of other places do you have any trouble going there?" She said, "No." I said, "Then what does it tell you when you tell me that God wants an appointment with you every day and you cannot keep it. You are telling me how important Satan and your flesh say those things really are. They are more important than going to the bank, more important than going to the grocery store, more important than going to the closet for the clothes you wear today, or breathing the air you breath. And Satan will oppose it every step of the way."

Let me tell you what it will be like if you have it, II Samuel 23:11-12 the mans name is Shama he was one of David's mighty men, listen to this statement, in fact I have dear evangelist friend who preaches a tremendous sermon on this text entitled I have left my pea patch for the last time, listen to the words of this text; and the Philistines were gathered together into a troop that is as an entire army organized, where was a piece of ground full of lentils and the people fled from the Philistines, in other words the Philistines came for a piece of ground where pea and beans were being raised to squelch the Israelite food supply and to steal food for themselves, but and listen carefully, Shama stood in the midst of that plot of ground and defended it and slew the Philistines and the Lord brought great victory.

Now if you have a viable and vital quiet time that's exactly how it will happen. Because there are Philistines everywhere gathered in a troop against you because they know how important this is. One of these days you won't meet any Philistines. If you just like today, you have never meet a Philistine, they are gone. If he had allowed them to withstand him, he would have allowed

somebody very temporary to overcome a purpose of God. It says the Lord brought a great victory that day. He stood in the middle of that plot of ground closed his hands around a weapon, welded his hands in place there and said I will die before I will give up this ground to these Philistines.

Christian, they will come at you from every side, hold your Bible like you are going to have to have your hand pried loose from it when the judgment comes and say come and get it because here we stand and in the name of God a great victory is going to be wrought here this day. God bless you as you work at having a viable, vital, powerful quiet time that will be a blessing to you and will be an honor to God and a source of his power displayed in the earth. God bless you.