

“SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR DAILY QUIET TIME”

Number One: Remember the Gospel, and Let it Work on You First

Every married person knows that unbroken routine may be the enemy of relationship. “A rut is a grave with the ends knocked out.” A highway sign in a western state said, “Choose your rut carefully, because you will be in it for the next twenty-five miles.” A little creative thought will keep your Quiet Time from becoming stale and stagnant, from “rutting.” In the next few vignettes, I want to address this matter.

Suggestion number one for improving your daily Quiet Time: *Go back to the basics on a regular basis.* The *Gospel* basics, not merely the devotional basics. Remind yourself to never tire of rehearsing the infinite dimensions of the glorious Gospel of Christ. “*I am a child of God because of the glorious achievement of Jesus in my behalf.*” Then, spend a little time in each Quiet Time reviewing and celebrating that achievement in it many facets.

Daily read the Word, and wherever you are reading, turn to a tiny “Gospel passage” (such as Titus 2:11-14, Colossians 2:14-16, Hebrews 2:14-16, I Corinthians 15:1-10, Ephesians 2:1-10, as examples; keep an “address list” of the many great passages, and use at least one of them on a regular basis), and ask God to help you fully appreciate this “so great salvation” (Hebrews 2:3). To appreciate it so much that your heart wants to shout! What is the rationale behind this strategy? Why rehearse the Gospel on a daily basis? For this reason: if a believer *forgets* or *drifts away from* or *sins away the awareness* of the fact that “the blood of Jesus goes on cleansing up from all sin” (I John 1:7), his Quiet Time will become a shambles. If a believer forgets that Jesus has made full settlement of all of his sin-debt and all accounts that attend it, his Quiet Time is quickly subject to collapse. If a believer forgets that the Gospel provides coverage for the “now” of his daily life as well as for the “then” of his conversion, his Quiet Time likely will suffer. If a believer misses the ongoing blessings of the glorious Gospel of Christ for his daily victory (the fullness of the Spirit, victory over sin and the flesh, etc.), he may look up one day to sadly see that his Quiet Time is the leading casualty of the deadly deficiency. A defunct Quiet Time will lead to a defunct Christian walk, and the defunct walk will further lock the door of his prayer closet—it becomes a really vicious cycle manipulated by the Enemy. So the happy rehearsal of the glorious Gospel of Christ serves multiple preventive (and curative) purposes.

In my own Quiet Time one morning this week, I was reading devotionally from an author who mentioned Martin Luther, the great German reformer. He mentioned in a brief chapter “the radical, tenacious hold Luther had on the simple truth of the Gospel.” Luther’s renowned confession, “Here I stand, I can do no other,” is a reflection of his two-fisted iron grip on the Gospel. Dear Christian, learn to think, walk, talk, eat, breathe, sleep, the Gospel all day long every day. It is an infinite and limitless and *glorious* subject; there is plenty of “thought material” to explore. The rehearsal of the Gospel on a regular basis tunes your heart to celebration and worship, and your Quiet Time offers the

best platform to experience and express this. Your Quiet Time will enable you to “adorn the Gospel,” but only if it is effective and powerful. Launching from a regular Gospel power-base will secure this.

Remember Who/what saved you. Remember Who/what first washed your sins away and ushered you perfectly clean into the Presence of God. Remember your first baby-fresh experience of Jesus and the Gospel. Remember the Word of Truth that first thundered in your soul in the grace and power of God. Remember that this simple/infinite message was what broke the chains of your captivity when you came to know the Liberator. Remember that this message is not one whit less powerful at this moment than it was at *that* moment. *Keep going back to the basic message, the foundational Gospel.* “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess” (Hebrews 10:23). “Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught” (Titus 1:9). “Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him” (Colossians 2:6). The best way to grow in Christ and stay fresh in your relationship with Him is to keep going back to the first step you took in becoming a Christian and then repeat that step over and over again every day. Repentance and faith should be “perennial plants” in the Christian’s Garden of Life. Trusting Jesus should mark every day’s activities, moment by moment. The righteousness we have in Christ is “by faith from first to last” (Romans 1:17).

“At the Cross, at the Cross, Where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away;
It was there by faith that I first saw the light,
And NOW I am happy all the day.”

All the writers of the New Testament launched their writings from this “pad of truth”—that justification by faith in Jesus Christ and His Finished Work is the only Gospel there is, and it is all we need now and forever.

Let this sentence stand as a description of the contrast we often see among Christians: “Perhaps the greatest sin of the church is that it regularly withholds the Gospel from itself.” You have only to look around you in the flagging fellowship of believers to see how true this is. “*Preach the Gospel to yourself every day,*” was the advice of one of the great devotional writers. Objectively, the Gospel is “finished”; it can’t be *undone* and it need not be *redone*. But subjectively, it must be rehearsed, reenacted in our minds as if we had never heard it at all, and celebrated in a daily paean of praise. Inherently, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not something we learn once and for all and then move on to higher things. No, no. We will be repeating the “entrance prayer” of the publican in the temple *the day we die*: “God, be merciful to me, *the sinner.*” Then, with the very next gasping breath, we may sing, “Thanks be unto God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ.”

In short, we should daily, by the grace and power of God and on the foundation of the revelation of His Word, “*reinvent the wheel.*” We must discover the Gospel all over again for ourselves every day.

“Tell me the story of Jesus, Write on my heart every word;
Tell me the story most precious, Sweetest that ever was heard.”

Since Jesus and His Cross are the centerpieces of Heaven, God won't mind us throwing the arms of faith around those pillars again each morning. Begin your Quiet Time with a rehearsal of the glorious Gospel of the Son of God, and God will “tune your heart to sing His praise” all day long.

The “coordination of the Spirit,” the miracle “booking” of God, is absolutely amazing when a believer walks in the Spirit. Just today, in my early morning Quiet Time with Him, I found a long paragraph in my devotional reading that practically echoes the idea of this vignette. I am going to juggle a few sentences and then repeat the paragraph here. *“The revelation of the Gospel of Christ, the gospel of faith, is the key revelation that surmounts all other visions and prophecies. There is no other way to grasp the things of the Spirit except by direct revelation, and this is as true for ordinary people today as it was for the Biblical prophets and apostles. Saying prayers, going to church, even reading the Bible are not enough. There must be direct, personal, experiential contact with the living God. Yes, the Bible is God's Word; but a person can study the Bible all his life and never hear from God. How pathetic it is to see fine human minds poking and prodding the Scriptures to try and force some meaning out of them, when the fact is that God's Word can only be understood by hearing God speak it all over again into your very own heart, so that the Word becomes as new and as fresh as the day it was first heard and written down. The apostles were great because they were the first to be told the mystery of the Gospel. But doesn't every Christian today have the same experience of God's grace as they did? Every Christian receives a personal revelation of the Gospel directly from Christ. Every Christian meets Jesus personally, walks with Him and talks with Him, and the result is spectacularly life-changing.”* Christian, you must prioritize this Gospel-based revelation from God, this experience of hearing His voice, and the resulting relationship with Him—*every day*.

As usual, a last word of caution is needed. The Gospel is a “two-edged sword.” “The Word of God is living and active, and *sharper than any two-edged sword.*” Its narrow blade (truth is always narrow) cuts to the quick. It is incisive and surgical, and its power slices to the core of our character. When we are walking in the Spirit, the very Presence of the Spirit enables us to joyfully take the “cut,” knowing that “this is what it's all about.” But when we come to the Closet corrupt and cold, character-twisted and calculating, the Word pierces us like the cold steel of an enemy warrior. This is what Glyn Evans meant when he described God as our “beloved Adversary.” When we are out of sync because of selfishness and sin, the Word is *surgical and/or medicinal*. “Physician, heal thyself.” Take the thrust of the Sword, and let it alert and repair you. Take the medicine, which tastes extremely bitter at the moment of ingestion. It may be His forced feeding, like a loving parent feeding bad-tasting medicine to an ailing child. Forget the bitter taste of the moment, anticipate the healing, and look for the “nevertheless, afterward” (Hebrews 12:11). To be able to demonstrate “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” for *your good, His glory, and the eternal gratification of*

multitudes of others, will be reward enough for getting things right when you grip the door-knob into the Prayer Closet.