

What Is a Quiet Time?

Quiet: a place and time where you can be still

Time: a regular and consistent period each day

“Quiet times” are dedicated times each day set aside to connect with God – to adore Him, to behold Him, to hear what He has to say to us through scripture, and to respond in prayer as God renews and transforms us.

Our goal as Christians is not just to know *about* God, but actually to know Him as one person knows another. He is our Father, our Friend, our Comforter, our Guide, and our Lord. Knowing Him in this way, talking with Him in this way, calls for responses of joy, of worship, of repentance and sorrow, of hope and expectation.¹ **Knowing and loving God – that’s what quiet times are about.**

Getting to Know God

- How do we get to know someone? Spend *time* with them and *talk* to them.
- What is one way that God talks to us? Through His *scripture*.
- How do we talk to God? Through *prayer*.

Quiet Time Fundamentals – So we see the three essential parts of quiet time are:

1. **Time**
2. **Scripture**
3. **Prayer**

One Method: Meditative Prayer

There are many different ways to do quiet time, and many excellent devotions and guides, but they all essentially come down to these three elements of time, scripture, and prayer. The method we are going to focus on here helps us **meditate on scripture** – interacting with God’s Word directly to discover what the Bible says on our own (rather than simply letting someone else tell us what it says) – and then **respond in prayer**.

We encourage you to try it, but also to try other methods or incorporate singing and devotionals as well. Experiment to find what helps you draw closer to God, and realize different methods might fit better with different seasons in your life.

“What you are on your knees in prayer, you *are* – and nothing more; everything else is for show. An awful lot of your Christian life is visible to other people, but your prayer life is practically to none at all. It’s hard to get away with committing adultery in the long run, but you can get away with never praying at all almost indefinitely – nobody’s going to know.” ~ Tim Keller

¹ Quiet Time Bible Guide: 365 Days Through the New Testament and Psalms by Cindy Bunch (editor)

Quiet Time: Meditation & Prayer

"Like most people, my devotional time consisted of a) Bible reading and then b) prayer. My prayer life changed, however, when I learned of and added a 'middle discipline' – meditation – between plain Bible reading and full-out prayer. **Meditation is prayer – full reflection on what God has just told you in His word. It is neither study nor prayer, exactly, but a combination.** Psalm 1, which is not a prayer, but a meditation, indicates that meditation is the doorway into deeper prayer. Learn to do meditative prayer, and you will enrich your prayer life in untold ways." ~ Tim Keller

1. Be Still (and know that He is God): Take a moment to be impressed with what you're about to do. Some ideas – think about:

- "Come, let us bow down and worship Him. Let us fall on our knees before the Lord our Maker."
- God is my Father, therefore I can come to Him as a child.
- Jesus is my High Priest, which means I have access to the throne of grace.
- The Holy Spirit is inside me, so that what I pray will be through His leading.

2. Invite: Ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart and mind to hear from Him, and to give you a humble and responsive heart that will be transformed by Him.

3. Read: Slowly read the scripture passage 2-3 times. Read for understanding.

- Observe basic facts, e.g.: Who, what where, when, why? What does it mean to the audience of the time?
- What does the text say about God? (e.g. His attributes, desires, promises, commands) About mankind?

4. Meditate: Become aware of God's loving presence and read the passage again, perhaps out loud. Notice how He might be speaking to you. Dwell on a word, phrase, or theme that jumps out at you.

- What has connected to my heart or mind?
(e.g. a characteristic of God to be grasped, a command to be obeyed, a comfort to be savored)
- Think deeply about it. What does it mean? What is it really saying? Put it into your own words.
- What can I adore God for *because of this*? What sins can I confess? What can I thank Him for? What petitions can I make?
- Why is God showing me this *today*?
- How does God want me to respond? How does He want to transform my heart, thinking, habits, and/or relationships?

5. Pray: Talk to God about what He has shown you through this text. Some find the ACTS model of prayer below helpful. But the essence is simply to respond to what God has revealed to you. Be yourself; ask questions; try not to rush. A response can also be silence, tears, or worship.

- Adore God for who He is (e.g. His attributes revealed in this passage)
- Confess the sinful emotions, attitudes, and behaviors that result when we forget who He is
- Thank God for what He has done
- Supplicate (ask) God to transform you and to help you apply what He has shown you today

Bonus: Intercede for Others. The Bible is not just *my story* – it is first and foremost *God's story*, then *our story*, and finally *my story*. What does this passage reveal about God's heart for the people and world around you (e.g. family, neighbors, workplace, Redeemer, City)? Who or what has God put on your heart today? Pray this passage for them too.

Free Prayer: Pray about whatever else is on your heart or on your prayer list. Now that you've listened to God's word and prayed on the basis of what He has told you today, you can better trust your own heart – it's been given guidance and rails to run on.

6. Behold: "See the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." End by adoring and appreciating some aspect of the excellence and beauty of Christ.

Quiet Times: Making It a Part of Your Rhythm

"The biggest problem is not having the time. And you don't make the time because it usually doesn't immediately grab your heart and you get distracted. **It's hard. But there is nothing more important than this.** Once you get to the place where your prayer life begins to grow again, or maybe for the first time, you'll say I've wasted a big part of my life. There is no way to know yourself except through prayer. There's no way to change what you worship, which is the way you change yourself, except through prayer. There's no way to please God except through prayer, because **when you pray you're really treating Him as God – you're giving Him your private world, not just the part that everybody sees – you're giving Him everything.**" ~ Tim Keller

Tips:

- **Be Expectant:** Expect more from prayer. Expect God to be delighted when you say hello. Expect God to reveal Himself to you. We can't dictate or force the experience – there's no formula or magic button – but we can expect more.
- **Be Intentional:** The goal is to find **one or more** consistent times each day when you're fully alert and free of distractions. Plan ahead. For example, if you want to spend time with God in the early morning, go to bed early; if you're tempted to check email, turn off your devices; if you find yourself preoccupied with the day ahead, keep a notepad next to you to record to-dos.
- **Be Realistic:** Start small and let the length of time grow. Also, rather than spending a big chunk of time just once a day, try spending smaller chunks throughout the day, for example, framing your day with quiet times in the morning and evening. Also, in the beginning it may take you a bit more time to get used to meditative prayer. That's okay. Only by practicing this in longer slices of time will you get to a place where you can do it naturally in just a few minutes.
- **Be Creative:** The quiet stillness of the early morning or bedtime is ideal, but you may want to experiment with times and places that work well with your temperament and schedule. For example, extroverts might find it easier to concentrate while sitting alone in a crowded café; the subway commute might have fewer interruptions than an apartment full of children.
- **Be Open:** While we recommend a combination of worship, scripture reading, meditation, and prayer, be open to how the Spirit leads you. For example, some days you may spend the bulk of the time rejoicing and singing, which may then lead to meditation of a Psalm; other days God's Word may cause you to repent, and be gently restored by His quiet, loving presence.
- **Be Kind to Yourself:** Remember that we can't earn God's love by being super disciplined; nor can we ever lose His love if we forget or get derailed. He loves us, period. God does not keep score of how often we meet with Him. He is our loving, ever-patient Father – it gives Him joy when His children come home to Him; and He misses us when we've wandered away.

"Knowing my temperament, I knew that my initial enthusiasm for reading the Bible could quickly wane. I might stay up late a few nights, get up early a few days, but I would not be able to keep it up. Yet I believed that somehow this was important to my life and my faith. What discipline could I adopt to make myself get up early every morning continually until it became a new habit of life? ...I dragged myself out of bed in the morning (with strong tea to wake me up) until God changed my sleeping habits... I studied with three key questions in mind: (1) What does the Bible passage say? (2) What does it mean to the people of the day when it was written? And (3) What does it mean to me? ...**I could not have conceived at the time that life with the Lord would be so joyous.** I know it would be *right*; I knew it would be *safe*; I knew He would be *faithful*. His grace was sufficient for all sense of inferiority and any other lack, but I never realized how *joyous* it would be." ~ A. Wetherell Johnson, *Created for Commitment*

More Quiet Time Ideas & Resources

Lord's Prayer

Use the entire prayer as the basis of your daily meditation, or focus on a different part each day of the week:

- *Sunday*: Our Father in heaven
- *Monday*: Hallowed be Your name
- *Tuesday*: Your kingdom come
- *Wednesday*: Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven
- *Thursday*: Give us today our daily bread
- *Friday*: And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors
- *Saturday*: And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one

Psalms

Cycle through the book of psalms, either on its own or as a compliment to your study of other books of the Bible. “How do you learn to pray? We’ve got to be plunged into God’s vocabulary for prayer. Immerse in the psalms. They are examples of how we should pray in every situation we can go through, and in every human emotion that we can have.” ~ Tim Keller

Church Bulletins

Save your Sunday bulletins and use them for your quiet times. You can meditate on and pray through the different sections (e.g. scripture, prayers, hymns, quotes) throughout the week and even start your own worship songbook with the hymns.

Verse of the Day

Lots of great apps (e.g. YouVersion) or sites that will deliver daily verse to your inbox.

Seeking God's Face: Praying with the Bible Through the Year *

Philip F. Reinders, Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2013.

Each daily devotional contains a number of different elements – an invitation into God’s presence, times of quiet, scripture, free prayer, a set prayer, and a closing blessing – that are all meant to be experienced together as prayer.

Daily Office Lectionary *

esv bible.org/devotions/bcp

A daily diet of Psalms, Old Testament, New Testament, and Gospel reading. The selections can be used for your morning and evening meditation and prayer.

Quiet Time Bible Study

Excellent guiding questions to help you discover God’s Word for yourself. You can follow their daily schedule at ivpress.com/bible/study.php, or select a book of the Bible and go at your own pace – just type in the name of the book at the end of the URL (e.g. ivpress.com/bible/genesis). The main page of each book provides an introduction that covers its historical background, as well as who wrote it, who it was written to, and why it was written. Try starting with the book of John, and alternate between Old and New Testaments. (A print copy of the just New Testament and Psalms is also available: *Quiet Time Bible Guide* by Cindy Bunch (editor), InterVarsity Press, 2005.)

* Recommended by David Bisgrove