

15 Ideas for Better Devotions

By Bob and Linda Barrett

What are some of the goals of a personal time with God?:

- to be **nourished and grow** in the Lord. (1 Peter 2:2)
- to **know God better** through His Word.
- to gain **victory over sin**. (Psalm 119:9&11)
- to **find God's will** for each day.
- to be **equipped** for more effective service.

Often overlooked goals:

- to do your part to **change the world** through prayer.
"Prayer does not enable us to do a greater work for God. Prayer IS a greater work for God." – Thomas Chalmers
- to **worship God** because He is worthy!

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS for spending time with God:

1. **Ask God to help you** with your inspiration time. Ask specifically for what you need. For example: discipline, alertness, understanding, change in some area of your life (e.g., release from bitterness or anger) "Open my eyes that I may see the wonderful things in your law." Psalm 119:18

2. **If you drink coffee or tea**, having a cup before your Bible study can help clear away the mental cobwebs. Others will find **a shower** invigorating.

BEST TIME & PLACE

3. Do your devotions **early in the day** so that you don't get caught up in distractions or when you are tired. Not a morning person? Try doing your devotions over lunch.

4. Choose **a place free from distractions** that **you enjoy being in**. Maybe it's a room with lots of windows/natural light and a great view of nature. Some people have a literal "prayer closet" where they post prayer requests, inspirational quotes, Scripture promises and verses they want to memorize, pictures of people they want to pray for, etc.

5. **Be willing to change it up!** Go to a park or a scenic overlook. Take a hike and spend time with God on a mountain top. Go up on the roof or sit in your tree stand. Return to a place where God answered a prayer or where something spiritually significant happened. **Special emphasis days:** Have a Forgiveness Day when you forgive or seek forgiveness. Other ideas: Praise Day, Thanks Day, Intercession Day (for your city or a ministry).

Schedule a Spiritual Retreat Day where you go someplace and get away from it all to pray, read, dream, journal, and set goals. Author/Pastor Mark Batterson gives this piece of advice: **Change of PACE + Change of PLACE = Change of PERSPECTIVE.** Don't let yourself get bored or you won't look forward to your time with the Lord.

DON'T ALWAYS BE QUIET

The term "quiet time" can be a misleading description for devotions. Busy, tired people may fall asleep if things get too quiet! Experiment with these ideas:

6. **Play and/or sing worship songs.** Many choruses are prayers or Scripture set to music. If you have favorite songs that easily and quickly connect you to Jesus, use them!

7. **If you play an instrument, don't be afraid to use it.** If you can't sing and play at the same time, go over the words in your mind.

8. **Pray, read the Word, praise, and worship out loud.** Get used to hearing the sound of your voice in the room. Psalm 47:1 encourages us to, "...shout unto God with a voice of triumph!" If you are feeling great or God has answered a prayer, let out a victory shout!

9. **Move it!** Praying on your knees is a great way to show reverence and humility. It's also a great way to fall asleep if you're tired! Try some of these ideas to keep your prayer time moving: **Walk** around when you pray. **Lift up your hands** in prayer/worship (and act of surrender) or **open your hands** symbolic of receiving God's blessing.

NOTETAKING, UNDERLINING, AND JOURNALING

Increased interaction with the Word increases spiritual growth!

If you HEAR something you retain a certain amount of information.

If you add SEEING/READING to HEARING you retain more.

SPEAKING, HEARING and SEEING is even better.

And when you combine HEARING, SEEING/READING, SPEAKING, and WRITING you are learning on multiple levels and greatly increase the chance that you will remember what you studied. With this in mind, consider these ideas:

10. Many people find it helpful to **underline** impactful verses/ideas and/or to **write notes/questions** in the margin of their Bible.

11. Some people **color important passages** in their Bible. e.g.: worship/prayer verses with GREEN for growth. Salvation/forgiveness with RED. Personal application in YELLOW.

12. **Journaling** is a great option for writing out thoughts, prayers, feelings, ideas, goals, things God is saying to you, sermons notes, and more. Purchase a small notebook. **Record the date** when you start your devotion time. **Write down observations or questions** from that day's Scripture reading. **Write out a praise or something/someone you want to pray for.** If you think of **something that could distract you** from finishing your devotions, write down the task so you won't forget it, then go back to spending time with the Lord.

13. Write down especially **meaningful verses** and why they impact you. **Outline** a passage, list all **the reasons** the writer gives for something, or note **repeated words** (count how many times it is repeated). Write down **life applications** or **decisions you plan to make** based on what you read. NOTE: Because you wrote it down, you can look back for the exact day you made a key decision to celebrate what God started.

14. **Do different kinds of Bible studies.** A **biographical study** on some person that interests you in the Word. Do a **topical** or a **word study** on something that you need to develop in your life. Go "shopping for what you need": by looking up key words in your Concordance. Examples: worship, faithfulness, prayer, forgiveness (or opposites of negative words like fear, anger, worry).

15. **During a special trip or weekend retreat,** write down significant moments when God spoke to you, healed you, filled you with the Holy Spirit, answered a prayer, taught you something you needed to learn, or set you free from something that once controlled you. Look back through these notes the following week to celebrate, to follow through on commitments, and to stay focused on the things that God showed you.

The BEST ENCOURAGEMENT to study the Bible is the Word itself!

Paul writes in Colossians 3:16: "**Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly...as you SING** (with instruments) psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in your hearts to God."

Romans 15:4: "For everything written in the Scripture was written to teach us, in order that we might have **hope through the patience and encouragement of the Scriptures.**"

The Word of God and PURITY:

Psalm 119:9; 11; 35-36: "How shall a young man keep his way pure? **By living according to your word.** I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Direct me in the path of your command, for there I find DELIGHT. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain."

The Word and PRAYER:

John 15:7: "If you remain in Me and **My words remain in you**, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you."

The Word at work EQUIPPING us:

1 Thessalonians 1:13: "When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, **the word of God, which is at work in you** who believe."

2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the person of God may be **thoroughly equipped** for every good work."

The Word and ASSURANCE:

1 John 5:13: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God **so that you may know** that you have eternal life."

The Word and JOY:

John 15:11: "I have told you this so that **my joy may be in you** and that **your joy may be complete.**"

The Word and PEACE:

John 16:33: "I have told you these things **so that in me you may have peace.** In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."