



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Equipping & Encouraging Believers
In Prayer

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DEVELOPING YOUR QUIET TIME

What do you think of when you hear the phrase "quiet time?" How do you respond to it? For some people, it is a precious event in which he or she spends time alone with God. For others it is something that they tried and have stopped doing. Others see it as a boring drudgery – a routine to carry out because "good Christians" have a quiet time. Some see it as a practice only for the "super-spiritual."

The phrase "quiet time" refers to the believer making time on a daily basis to spend with God. The quiet time usually consists of reading the Word of God and praying to God. It is the intentional commitment to take time each day to focus on God's Word and spend time in prayer with Him. It is the determination to dedicate a portion of your day that you might talk to God and listen to God. The history of the church is filled with believers who carved out time each day for this "quiet time." It is a vital practice that should characterize every believer's life. Every believer is in need of this daily time alone with God.

Now I can hear the sighs and the groans that are coming from some of you. Maybe you're thinking, "I tried it and it just didn't work for me." Or perhaps you are feeling that this will be just one more legalistic duty that you have on

your checklist of what a "good Christian" ought to do. Or maybe you're stuck in a rut and are wondering if you should even continue to pursue this daily time alone with God.

I acknowledge that the quiet time can become a routine – a legalistic burden without joy or power. However, that is true of any spiritual discipline. Any spiritual discipline that is divorced from intimacy with God and a focus on Him will become a dead and dry routine. Any spiritual discipline that is done just for the sake of doing it will become a heavy burden. If we are not focusing on God, the quiet time can become a matter of simply going through the motions.

And I realize that the Bible never says, "You shall have a quiet time each day." There is no direct command for a believer to have a quiet time. Yet the Word of God provides compelling evidence for our need to get alone and to get with God each day. There are biblical truths that reveal that a believer must carve out time each day with God. God can help you build a unique and rich quiet time.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will deal with building a quiet time. We will begin by looking at why a believer needs a quiet time. Then we will examine Jesus' instructions

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concerning the quiet time. And we will examine ways to build and strengthen your time alone with God. The purpose of this issue is to call you to get alone and get with God as never before in your relationship with Him. Wherever you are in your relationship with Him, it is my hope and prayer that you will develop a deeper, more mature relationship with Him.

Why Should A Believer Have a Quiet Time?

The Bible reveals that a believer needs to spend time alone with God on a daily basis. Developing a quiet time should be the pursuit of every believer. Why is there such a need for a daily quiet time?

First, God desires to spend time with you. God loves you and has saved you for the purpose of fellowship, "But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the LORD will hear when I call to Him" (**Psalm 4:3**). God has saved you that you might spend time with Him. He longs to hear your voice and for you to hear His voice (**Matthew 6:6**). Your Father's heart beats for you. He loves you and desires to communicate with you. He hears when you call to Him.

Your Father wants you to develop a quiet time with Him because of His great love and desire for you. He longs to have an intimate relationship with You. God is not an unmerciful tyrant who demands that you read the Word and pray each day or else. He is a loving Father with a passionate desire to spend time with you. He saved you for this reason. His heart yearns for a deep relationship with you. This is why you should strive to build a quiet time. It is not because you have to or God will "zap" you. It's not so that you can brag about your relationship with God. It is not because of guilt. Yet, it is because you have a loving Father who desires You and longs to have a relationship with You. The everlasting and almighty God desires You and longs to spend time with You each day.

The example of Jesus should encourage you to build a quiet time with God. The Bible reveals that Jesus spent time alone with the

Father, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed" (**Mark 1:35**). Jesus' life was characterized by getting alone and getting with His Father (**Luke 4:1-13, 6:12-13, 14:32-42**). If the Son of God needed to spend time alone with the Father daily, how much more do you and I need that time alone with God? Jesus faced many demands on His time. He experienced pressure from all sides. Yet, He carved out time to spend with His

Father. His example should stir us to make the same commitment.

Spending time alone with God empowers us to live for and serve Him. The Bible says in **Luke 5:16**, "So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." Then **Luke 5:17** says, "And the power of the Lord was present to heal them." Do you see the connection? Jesus spent time alone with the Father. He then had the power to heal the sick. He received the insight and power to heal as He spent time alone with God. Spending time alone with God is the key to experiencing God's power for living for Him and ministering before Him. It is only as you seek Him daily that you receive the empowering to serve Him.

Your daily quiet time prepares you for corporate worship. The Bible declares our need to worship together with the people of God, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). God desires that we join with our brothers and sisters for corporate worship. Yet, if we are not worshipping God six days a week, we certainly will not worship Him one day a week. Our daily time alone with God prepares us to worship with believers in corporate worship. It is an essential for preparing your life for worship on Sunday or any other times that you join with other believers for worship.

Building a quiet time is a practical way of taking advantage of your access through Jesus

(Ephesians 2:18). Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, you now have access to God. You are given the privilege to communicate and spend time with the God of the universe. Jesus has opened the door to God's presence for you. How do you respond to this amazing and glorious privilege? You spend time alone with God! By spending time alone with God you are taking advantage of Christ's gift of access to the Father. Jesus bled, died, and was raised from the dead that you might have this privilege. Don't waste this gift; take advantage of it by spending time alone with God.

How Do You Build A Quiet Time?

We have already examined the biblical truths that lay the foundation for having a quiet time. The Bible teaches the need to get alone and get with your Father. Now how do you develop a quiet time in your personal life?

There are two basic building blocks that you can use to develop your quiet time with God. They are the Word of God and prayer. A quiet time basically consists of reading the Word and praying to God.

Why should you read the Word as a part of your quiet time? There are some basic reasons for this.

- *The Word of God prepares you to enter God's presence.* Paul declares that the Word has a washing, cleansing power (**Ephesians 5:26**). The Word will clear your mind of clutter. It will help you to focus on the Lord. It will also point out sins that you need to confess before you pray (**Psalms 66:18**).
- *God speaks to you through His Word.* God's primary way of speaking to you will be through His Word. When you pray, you are speaking to God. When you are in the Word, you can listen to God.
- *The Word will provide fuel and insight for your praying.* The Holy Spirit will provide you with a variety of insights for your praying through the Word. He will often grant you insight during your reading that

will apply to that particular day or the needs of that particular day.

The other building block for your quiet time is prayer. Your quiet time is the opportunity for you to listen to God through His Word and to speak to God through prayer. Jesus says that we are to get alone in a secret place and "pray to the Father" (**Matthew 6:6**). The purpose of the quiet time is to focus on the Father – to listen to Him and to pour out our heart before Him.

You can develop your quiet time in a variety of ways. Yet, the Word and prayer are essential to your time alone with God. The following are some suggestions on how you can build your quiet time.

- ❖ *Begin by being still before the Lord.* Take time to calm your heart and mind before you start your quiet time.
- ❖ *Spend time in the Word.* The basic way that you spend time in the Word is by reading the Word. It would be beneficial for you to read through the Word in a year. There are a variety of Bible reading plans that can help you pray systematically through the Word. You might also consider meditating on a verse or two that stands out to you. You can use this time to memorize a verse or two.
- ❖ *Spend time in prayer.* You can pray either before or after you spend time in the Word. Relax and rest in God's promises in **James 4:8**. Pour your heart out to God. Use the essential aspects of prayer – praise, confession, thanksgiving, petition, listening, pleading. Focus on Him and speak to Him as your loving and caring Father.

These are some practical suggestions on how to build your quiet time. One word of caution though – don't get caught up in procedure and lose sight of the relationship. God is not as interested in your fine phrases or in your meeting him punctually every day as he is in **you**. This is not a business proposition. It is not about a legal contract. Your quiet time hinges on a relationship and not on a procedure.

Your quiet time is not about achievement or performance. To borrow the Nike advertising slogan, "Stop worrying about getting it 'right.' Stop worrying about yourself, your words, and your procedure and **just do it.**" There will always be room for growth and improvement. You can develop and deepen your quiet time through a variety of means. Yet, above all, God longs to hear from you and speak to you from His Word. You can choose to do this in a variety of ways. Yet, the essential is to focus on God – speaking to Him and listening to Him.

Jesus' Instructions For Your Quiet Time

In **Matthew 6:6**, Jesus teaches that we are to get alone and get with our Father. In other words, we are to develop a quiet time alone with Him. In this verse, Jesus gives us some basic instructions for building this quiet time with the Father. Jesus says, "But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (**Matthew 6:6**). From this verse, we can glean the following guidelines for our quiet time:

- *Make an intentional commitment to spend time alone with the Father.* Jesus says to go into a room and shut the door. This refers to the fact that one has to make a deliberate choice to spend time with God. It does not happen by chance or coincidence. You must make a commitment to spend time alone with Him.
- *Find a place to have your quiet time.* Jesus says that we are to go into a room. In other words, we are to find a secret place – our own little holy ground. Find a place where you can meet with God each day.
- *Focus on the Father.* Your quiet time is about a relationship and not a procedure. Listen to His voice as you read and meditate on the Word. Speak to Him as

you pray. Your quiet time is an encounter with God.

- *Seek to deal with your sin and impure motives.* Jesus says, "the Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." It is interesting that Jesus refers to the Father who "sees" in secret. I have often wondered why Jesus said this instead of the Father who "hears" in secret. The truth is that God sees the heart. He knows our motivations. He sees our sins. If we are going to have a vivid encounter with Him, then we must come clean with our sins and our impure motives. If we desire to meet with Him and have Him answer our prayers, we must strive to have a pure heart before Him.
- *Approach your quiet times with God with anticipation.* Jesus promises that God will hear and respond as we seek Him. God will meet with you. He will listen to you. He will speak to you. Approach your time with Him in confidence and great anticipation.

Invigorating Your Quiet Time

Whether you are just beginning to develop your quiet time or if you have been doing this for years, you must strive for variety. Just as in any good relationship, our time with God needs change. You will have occasion for developing different ways of meeting with God. You will need to come up with activities that will enliven your time with Him.

The following are some suggestions on how you can invigorate your quiet time. They are offered to stimulate your thinking about your quiet time and how you can add variety to it. You can use these suggestions or develop your own from it. The key is to add variety to your unique quiet time. This will guard you against simply going through the motions of the quiet time. And it can help you strengthen and invigorate your time with God. However don't feel constant pressure to innovate. Perpetually experimenting and never establishing solid habits will only leave you tired. But do allow yourself some room for variety in your quiet time.

Have times of silence during your quiet time.

Many times our "quiet" times are not very quiet. You might want to fill your quiet times with periods of silence. You can spend time meditating on the Word. You can listen to God in silence. You can just be still and know that He is God, simply enjoying His presence.

Meditate on the Word. As you read a passage of Scripture, reflect on the following questions: "What does this text teach me about God? About myself? About the way I am to live before Him?" Read the Bible not just for information but also for personal transformation.

Keep a spiritual journal. A spiritual journal is a personal record of God's work in your life. It is keeping track of what God has done and is doing in your life. You might consider writing in your journal a part of your devotional time.

Pray the Word of God. Never close your Bible during your quiet time. The Word can provide you with insights and words to pray. It is God's prayer manual. You may consider using each day's Bible reading to inspire and guide your prayer time with God. You might consider praying systematically through some book like Proverbs or the Psalms.

Pray the words of others. You can use the prayers of others to jump-start your own praying. I have had people object to this suggestion. They feel that praying the prayers of others will cut out heartfelt, genuine prayer. However, using the prayers of others can help you articulate the yearnings of your heart when you can't find the words. And, the prayers of others "prime the pump" when you don't feel like praying or don't know what to pray. There are a variety of books that record the prayers of church history. You might also consider checking out the "Praying With The Saints" devotional at the Prayer Closet web site (www.prayerclosetministries.org).

Use praise and worship music during your quiet times. Music can enhance your time with God. It can help you worship and adore Him. It can aid you in slowing down and

worshipping God. It can assist you in focusing on God and His voice. You might even consider using a hymnal in your personal worship. The hymns can provide you with the words and ideas that you can use to adore God.

Recruit an accountability partner. Ask someone to hold you accountable for your quiet time. This accountability partner can encourage you, pray for you, and listen to you. He or she can help you work through the dry times.

Try having your quiet time in a different place. You might consider changing the place where you have your quiet time. This simple change can make a profound difference.

Divide your quiet time and spend time with God in different places. During a dry time in my prayer life, I decided to try this for a while. I would leave Bibles and journals at different places at the house and at my office. I would have a quiet time in the morning at a particular place. I would read a portion of my daily Bible reading and spend time in prayer. At the end of the day, I would go to another place and finish my Bible reading and spend more time in prayer. I would rotate the places that I had the quiet time each day. This helped me to break out of the dry time.

Pray with different postures. The Bible reveals that one can pray in a variety of ways – standing, sitting, kneeling, raised hands, and lying prostrate on the floor. Incorporate these into your quiet time.

Use a different translation of the Bible. You might consider using a different translation for your quiet time. This will give you a different perspective and can provide rich insight for your prayers.

Incorporate fasting into your quiet time. You might consider fasting at least once a week. This will help you to pray more fervently and focus on God.

Begin your quiet time with the question, "Who am I spending time with today?" This

question helps you to focus on God and His character. You might even meditate on verses that speak of God's character before you begin your quiet time with Him.

Pray about your quiet time. Your time alone with God is crucial. For this reason, you should seek God concerning it. The following Scripture prayers are offered to help you do this.

"Father, I pray that as the deer pants for the water brooks, I will long for and desire You. Create within me the passionate longing to spend time with You each day" (Psalm 42:1-2).

"Father, thank You for loving me. Thank You for delighting in me. I plead that I would grow in my love and delight for You. I plead that I would desire You above all else" (Psalm 4:3; Matthew 22:37)

"Father, I ask that You would remove any obstacles that keep me from spending time with You. I plead that You would work to remove any hindrances to my having a deeper, more intimate relationship with You" (Psalm 115:3).

Praying For Your Pastor's Preaching

E.M. Bounds wrote, "A praying church creates a spiritual atmosphere most favorable to preaching . . . Prayer makes preaching strong, gives it unction, and makes it stick." Gardiner Spring writes in agreement with this, "If a people are looking for rich sermons from their minister, their prayers must supply him with the needed material. If they expect powerful sermons, their prayers must make him a blessing to the souls of men! . . . It is at a fearful expense that ministers are ever allowed to take the pulpit without being preceded, accompanied, and followed by the earnest prayers of the churches. It is no marvel that the pulpit is so powerless, and ministers so often disheartened when there are so few to hold up their hands." Your pastor's power and effectiveness in preaching will be determined by your praying.

It is only as God's people pray for their pastor that the pastor will preach with power and effectiveness. Through prayer, the people of

God encourage and aid their pastors in declaring the eternal truth of God's Word. Do you want you pastor to preach the truth in a powerful and compelling way? Pray for your pastor's preaching. Do you want your church to experience awakening and growth? Pray for your pastor's preaching. Do you want to see lives transformed and your area changed? Pray for your pastor's preaching.

The following is a prayer model to equip you to pray for your pastor's preaching. It is designed to help you cover your pastor before, during, and after the sermon.

Before The Sermon (During The Week)

Father, I ask in the name of Jesus that You would empower _____ to study the Word. Grant _____ fresh and rich insights and illustrations. I pray that _____ would rightly divide the Word (2 Timothy 2:15).

Father, I plead that You would prepare _____'s heart to preach Your Word. I ask that _____ would seek You each day, confessing and repenting of sin. Mold _____ into a vessel through which You can declare Your truth. (1 John 1:9).

Father, I plead that You would prepare the hearts and lives of people to receive _____'s sermons. I ask that You would work to create within each person the brokenness and readiness to listen and obey the truth that _____ declares. I pray that the people will be hearers and doers of the Word (James 1:21-22).

During The Sermon

Father, I ask in the name of Jesus that You would bind and remove any forces that will attempt to hinder _____'s preaching. I plead that no scheme of the enemy will prosper in hindering _____'s preaching (1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8).

Holy Spirit, I plead with You to work powerfully in the lives of those who are hearing _____'s preaching. I ask in the

name of Jesus that You would enlighten and change every person through _____'s preaching today. Holy Spirit, release Your power through _____'s preaching and transform lives (**John 3:3,5, 16:7**).

Father, I pray that _____ would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Empower _____ to declare the truth with great power and clarity (**Ephesians 5:18**).

After The Sermon

Father, I plead that You would hinder and stop the work of the evil one. I ask that he would not snatch the Word from the hearts of the people. I plead that Your Word would take deep root in the lives of the people (**Matthew 13:19**).

Holy Spirit, cause the people to remember the truth of _____'s sermon throughout the week. Help them to apply it to their lives (**John 16:13**).

Father, I pray that _____'s sermons would take root and bring forth fruit in the lives of the people (**Matthew 13:23**).

Prayerwalking Your Home

One of the most powerful ways that you can pray for your family is by prayerwalking your house. This spiritual exercise can invigorate your praying for your family. It can also help you to cover your family with intercession.

You may be wondering, "How do I prayerwalk my house?" When you prayerwalk, you pray according to what you see, smell, hear, and feel. This is something that you can do in your home. As you walk through your house, talk to God about what you see, smell, hear, and feel. Base your praise and petitions on these things as you move throughout your home.

You can prayerwalk your home in two basic ways. One way is to pray on a daily basis. This means praying for your family as you go through your daily routine (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**). As you go through your regular routine, pray specific and pointed prayers for your family. You might also consider doing a periodic prayerwalk of your house. During this time, you

intentionally walk and pray through your house. It is a set time when you go through the entirety of your house or apartment, praying specifically for your family. During these times, you could involve the whole family. It would be an ideal time to teach your children about prayerwalking.

The following are some suggestions on how you could prayerwalk your house:

The kitchen – Pray that your family will hunger for God's Word and will be filled with its truth.

A bed – Ask that the family member would learn to rest in Christ and trust Him regardless.

A bathtub or shower – Plead that the members of your family will confess and forsake sin and will experience the cleansing of Jesus' blood.

A closet – Ask that your family will have a spirit of prayer and will have a quiet time with God.

A thermostat – Pray that your family will be on fire for God and that they will not be lukewarm.

A clock – Plead that your family will not waste time but will be diligent in serving God until Christ returns.

The front door – Ask that evil influences will be kept out of your home and that only righteous influences will be allowed.

The doorbell – Pray that your family will be sensitive to hear and obey the voice of God.

These suggestions are offered to you to help you get started prayerwalking your home. These are only suggestions that can help you see the variety of ways that you can prayerwalk your home. These are offered just to help you get started. As you prayerwalk, you will receive many other insights that you can use to intercede for your home. Prayerwalk your home and cling to **Galatians 6:9!**

Christmas And The Prayer Closet

Do you need gift ideas for Christmas shopping? What do you get your Sunday

School class or Bible study group? Do you want to give a gift that will make a difference? At *The Prayer Closet*, we are striving to create and produce materials that will encourage and train believers and churches in prayer. The following are some of our new products that we have developed. These products are designed to help you and your church grow in prayer. They will also make excellent Christmas gifts.

The 2004 Prayer Bulletin

The 2004 Prayer Bulletin is now available. These bulletin inserts will help you to emphasize prayer in your church. Each month has a particular prayer emphasis. You can download a master copy at the Prayer Closet web site. Or you can purchase a hard copy from us for \$3.00.

The Box Of Nations

The Box of Nations is designed to help you pray consistently for the nations of the world. The nations of the world are placed on 3X5 cards that you can use in your prayer time. You are also provided with prayer guides to help you pray. All of these come in an attractive card box to help you store them.

~~Suggested Donation: \$8.00~~

The Kingdom Praying Calendar

The Kingdom Praying Calendar enables you to pray for the nations of the world along with other missions concerns. The calendar has built in prayer guides to help you pray. It will enable

you to impact the nations.
Suggested Donation: \$8.00

Arise And Walk! Preparing For Powerful Prayerwalking

Arise And Walk! is a daily devotional that helps you prepare yourself for prayerwalking. It provides you with basic teaching about prayerwalking along with helping you get in tune with God. It can be used by individuals or for group study.

Suggested Donation: 8.00

Beginning Prayer Evangelism Packet

This packet is ideal for teaching believers how to pray for the lost. It contains a Praying For the Lost brochure, a prayerwalking key ring, and a personal evangelism bookmark. Pastors or prayer coordinators can use this material to equip believers in praying for the lost.

Suggested Donation: \$ 3.00

Buy 6 or more: \$2.00

The Prayerwalking Starter Kit

This kit will help you get started in prayerwalking. It designed for the beginner who wants to practice prayerwalking. It will also encourage the veteran prayerwalker. This kit contains the Prayerwalking manual, the Arise And Walk! devotional, and two prayerwalking key rings.

Suggested Donation: \$21.00

Buy six or more \$14.00



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