

# How to Have a Quiet Time With God

By Rick Warren

In any relationship, we grow closer through sharing time with one another. The same is true with God. Here is how to develop a regular habit of spending time with God. Maybe you're motivated to spend time with God, but you don't know how to make the most of it. There are four essential elements of a good quiet time:

**Start** with the proper attitudes.

**Select** a specific time.

**Choose** a special place.

**Follow** a simple plan.

In God's eyes, why we do something is far more important than what we do. On one occasion God told Samuel, "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). When you come to God, you need these right attitudes:

**Expectancy.** Come before God with anticipation, expecting to have a good time of fellowship and receive a blessing from your time together. This is what David expected: "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you" (Psalm 63:1; see also Psalm 42:1).

**Reverence.** Don't rush into God's presence, but prepare your heart by being still before him. Let the quiet clear away the thoughts of the world. The prophet Habakkuk tells us, "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him" (Habakkuk 2:20; see also Psalm 89:7). Coming into the presence of God is not like going to a football game.

**Alertness.** Remember that you are meeting with the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Redeemer of mankind. Be thoroughly rested and alert. The best preparation for a morning quiet time begins the night before. Get to bed early so you can give God your full attention in the morning.

**Willingness to obey.** This attitude is crucial: You don't come to your quiet time to choose what you will or won't do, but with the purpose of doing anything and everything God wants you to do. Jesus said, "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:17). So come to meet the Lord having already chosen to do his will no matter what.

## Make a Date With Jesus!

Decide in advance when and for how long your quiet time should be. The general rule is this: The ideal time is when you are at your best. Give God the best part of your day—when you are the freshest and most alert. Don't try to serve God with your leftover time.

It was Jesus' own practice to rise early to pray and meet with the Father. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35).

In the Bible many godly men and women rose early to meet with God. Some of these were Abraham, Job, Jacob, Moses, Hannah, and David.

The great revival among British college students in the late 19th century began with these historic words: "Remember the Morning Watch!" Think of your morning meeting with God as your Morning Watch. Doctors tell us breakfast is our most important meal, giving us energy, alertness, and even establishing our moods for the day. Likewise, we need a "spiritual breakfast" to start our day off right and make sure we are giving Jesus first place. We are to seek his kingdom first (Matthew 6:33).

Finally, in the morning our minds are less cluttered. Our thoughts are fresh, we are rested, and it's usually the quietest time. One mother sets her alarm clock for 4 a.m., has her quiet time, goes back to bed, and then rises when everyone else in the household gets up. Early morning, she explains, is the only time her house is quiet! It works for her; you need to select a time that will work for you.

Whatever time you set, be consistent in it. Schedule it on your calendar; make an appointment with God as you would with anyone else. Make a date with Jesus! Then make sure you keep it at all costs.

How much time you spend is a matter to be decided between you and the Lord. If a quiet time is new to you, start out slow, but aim eventually to spend not less than 15 minutes a day with God. Out of the 168 hours we all have in a week, 1 hour 45 minutes seems terribly small when you consider that you were created to have fellowship with God.

## Choose a Special Place

Where you have your quiet time is just as important as when. The Bible indicates that Abraham had a regular place where he met with God (Genesis 19:27). Jesus had a custom of praying in the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. “Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him” (Luke 22:39).

Your place ought to be a secluded place, somewhere you can be alone, where it’s quiet, and where you will not be disturbed or interrupted. This may take some ingenuity, but it is necessary. It ought to be a place ...

- Where you can pray aloud without disturbing others.
- Where you have good lighting for reading (a desk, perhaps).
- Where you are comfortable. (Bed is not a good choice. That’s too comfortable!)

Wherever you choose, make it a sacred place—a place you set aside to meet each day with the Lord of the universe.

## Follow a Simple Plan

You’ll need a general plan to make your quiet time successful, but the main rule is this: Keep your plan simple. Don’t let it detract from your time with Christ. Below are six points for a workable quiet time. *You will need the following three items:*

- **A Bible:** a contemporary translation (“New International Version” or “New American Standard” for example)
- **A notebook:** for writing down what the Lord shows you and for making a prayer list.

Relax and wait on God. Be still and quiet for a minute to put yourself in a reverent mood. Follow God’s admonition: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10; see also Isaiah 30:15, 40:31).

**Request** that God cleanse your heart and guide you into the time together. Here’s a great Scripture to memorize: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24). You must be in tune with the Author of the Book before you can understand what he wrote.

**Read** a section of the Scripture. This is where your conversation with God begins. He speaks to you through his Word, and you speak with him in prayer.

## Read Your Bible...

**Slowly.** Don’t race through it.

**Repeatedly,** until you start to picture it in your mind. The reason some people don’t get more out of their Bible reading is that they do not read this way.

**Without stopping.** Remember that your goal here is not to gain information, but to feed on the Word and get to know Christ better.

**Aloud but quietly.** This helps you concentrate on and understand what you’re reading. Read softly enough, however, so that you don’t disturb anyone.

**Systematically.** Read through one book at a time in orderly fashion—not using the “random dip” method—a passage here, a chapter there. Read the Bible as it was written—a book or letter at a time.

**To get the sweep of a book.** On some occasions you may want to survey a whole book. In that case, you will read it quickly to get the sweep of the total revelation.

**Reflect and Remember.** To have the Scriptures speak to you meaningfully, you should meditate on what you are reading and memorize verses that particularly speak to you. Meditation is “seriously contemplating a thought over and over in your mind.”

**Record** what God has shown you. When God speaks to you through his Word, record what you have discovered. Writing it down enables you both to remember what God revealed to you and to check up on your biblical discoveries.

**Request** from God through a time of prayer. After God has spoken to you through his Word, speak to him in prayer. This is your part of the conversation with the Lord.

## Closing Thoughts

*Keep your quiet time fresh with these tips:*

**Vary your plan.** From time to time change your methods. Don’t fall into the trap of performing a method instead of getting to know Christ.

**Sometimes when prayer seems hard and heavy,** spend your whole quiet time just thanking God for who he is and what he has done. In Psalm 145 the psalmist asked nothing for himself. Or just sing some songs of praise to God.

**Spend a whole quiet time in Scripture memory.** Let God speak to you in this special and challenging way.

**Remember your main purpose:** to get to know Christ. Don’t let your quiet time become a legalistic exercise in “doing your duty.” Remember that you are there to meet Jesus Christ and get to know him.