

Spiritual Trainer Series

*Time Alone
With God*

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Time Alone With God

*He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul....
(Psalm 23:2-3 NASB)*

What are the benefits of spending time alone with God?

- You get to be with your Creator and Savior!
- You get direction for your life by talking and listening to Him.
- You find peace, comfort, strength, and restoration from being in His presence.
- You are humbled and grateful that the God of the universe desires to be with you.

Doing "Whatever it Takes" to Schedule Time with God!

There was a young student from Cambridge University named Thorton, who in 1882 found that he was having a difficult time getting out of bed in the morning to have his time alone with God. To combat his laziness, he invented a contraption to ensure that he would get up. He attached a fishing line to his sheets, and he made sure that the vibration of his alarm clock would trigger his fishing tackle to rip the sheets off him!

❖ What do you need to do to keep God in your schedule?

(The following ideas were adapted from *Personal Bible Study Methods* by Rick Warren, 1981. Used with the permission of Pastors.com, Inc, Foothill Ranch, CA. All rights reserved.)

Start with the Proper Attitude

1. **In God's eyes, why you do something is far more important than what you 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)*

2. **It is quite possible to do the right thing but with the wrong attitude.** When you come to meet with your Creator in a meaningful time alone, you should have these proper attitudes:

Expectancy. Come before God with anticipation and eagerness. Expect to have a good time of fellowship with Him.

Reverence. Don't rush into God's presence, but prepare your heart by being still before Him and letting the quietness clear away the thoughts of the world.

*But the LORD is in His holy temple;
let all the earth be silent before Him.
(Habakkuk 2:20)*

Willingness to obey. This attitude is crucial. Come to meet the Lord having already chosen to do His will no matter what.

- ❖ What attitude do you have most often about meeting with your Creator: expectancy, reverence, and willingness to obey—or guilt, obligation, hurriedness, discouragement, or other?

Select a Specific Time

1. When should I have my quiet time?

The general rule is this: The best time is when you are at your best! Give God the best part of your day—when you are the most fresh and alert. Don't try to meet with God with your leftover time.

Remember the Morning Watch!

For many people, early morning seems to be the best time to meet with God. The cry during the great revival among British college students in the late 19th century regarding their quiet time was "Remember the Morning Watch!"

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, Moses, Job, Hannah, Jacob, and David.

"I want to hear the voice of God before I hear anyone else's in the morning, and His is the last voice I want to hear at night."

- Stephen Olford, New York minister for many years

- ❖ When are you at your best—the most alert?

2. How much time should I spend with the Lord?

If you've never had a consistent quiet time before, you may want to start with a few minutes. Don't try for a two-hour session at first. You'll only get discouraged. You must grow in this relationship as you do in any other. It's better to be consistent with a short time than to meet for an hour every other week.

- ❖ How much time can you realistically spend regularly with the Lord on a daily basis?

Choose a Special Place

1. **Where you have your quiet time is also important.** Jesus had a custom of praying in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives.

(Luke 22:39, underline added)

2. **Your special place ought to be somewhere quiet where you can be alone and where you will not be interrupted.** In today's noisy world, 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. (Warning: your bed is too comfortable!)

3. Wherever you decide to meet with the Lord, make it a special place for you and Him. As the days go by, that place will come to mean a lot to you because of the wonderful times you experience there with Jesus Christ. In order to avoid being interrupted, some people have had their quiet times in the silence of their parked car, in a walk-in closet at home, in the privacy of their backyard, and even in a deserted baseball dugout.

❖ Where would you like to meet with God?

What Will I Need?

A Bible - a contemporary translation

A notebook - for writing down what the Lord shows you and for making a current list of your prayers (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication)

Song sheet or CD/audiocassette - if you want to sing during your praise time

Follow a Simple Six-Point Plan

- 1. Relax:** Wait on God. Slow down. Be still for a minute; don't come running into God's presence and start talking immediately. Follow God's admonition:

Be still, and know that I am God.
(Psalm 46:10)

- 2. Request:** Pray briefly. This is a short opening prayer to ask God to cleanse your heart and guide you into the time together. A good Scripture to memorize is this:

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)

- 3. Read:** Read a section of Scripture. This is where your conversation with God begins. He speaks to you through His Word, and you speak to Him in prayer. Read your Bible...

Slowly. Don't be in a hurry; don't try to read too much.

Repeatedly. Read a passage over and over until you start to picture it in your mind.

Without stopping. Don't stop in the middle of a sentence to do a doctrinal study. Just read that section for the joy of it, allowing God to speak to you. Remember that your goal is not to gain scholarly acclaim, but to feed on the Word and get to know Christ better.

Aloud. Reading it aloud may improve your concentration. It will also help you better understand what you are reading because you will be both seeing and hearing the passages.

Systematically. Read through an entire book of the Bible before jumping to another book. In other words, read in an orderly method. Do not use the "random dip" method—a passage here, a chapter there.

4. **Reflect and Remember:** Meditate and memorize. In order to have the Scriptures speak to you meaningfully, you should meditate on what you are reading. Meditation is "seriously contemplating a thought over and over in your mind." Then, you can memorize verses that particularly speak to you.
 5. **Record:** Write down what God has shown you. When God speaks to you through His Word, record what He has revealed, so you will remember it.
 6. **Request:** Have your 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 which step in the six-point plan do you usually have the most success? Why do you think that is so?
 - ❖ Which do you think is the most difficult? Why?

What if I miss a day? Don't worry about missing a day. If you've let time slip by without meeting with your Creator, just start again! Don't go on a guilt trip. Don't get legalistic. Don't give up. Research tells us that it usually takes us three weeks to get familiar with one new task or habit; it takes at least another three weeks before it becomes a habit.

What if you missed a day of eating? Certainly you'd want to start again!

Call to Action

Prayer of Commitment: If you are convinced that God wants you to spend regularly scheduled time with Him, tell Him that you commit to spending a definite time with Him every day, no matter what the cost. Let Him know that you are depending on His strength to help you be consistent and develop this habit for His glory.

Action Steps

1. Ask yourself: Who could hold me accountable via email or phone once a week to ask one or more of the following questions?

How did your time alone with God go last week?

What do you think God was trying to say to you?

Have you noticed any patterns of what typically keeps you from spending time with God?

2. Have a five-minute time alone with God right now (or soon!) and let someone know how it went!
3. Read the "Spiritual Trainer Challenge" on page 10 to see if you are being prompted by the Holy Spirit to disciple someone on this topic of spending time alone with God.

Great Resources

Individual Solitude Experiences (Lake Forest: Saddleback Church) 2002.

These three one-hour Solitude Experiences will give you a chance to sit privately in the presence of God. By using the companion CD with these booklets, you can enhance your experience as a reader guides you through the printed material. The following booklets (with CD or audio cassette tape) are individually available at the weekend Resource Tent or from Saddleback's Maturity Team:

- *Make My Heart Your Home*
- *Turning Worry Into Trust*
- *Hope: Abiding in His Care*

Solitude Series Small Group Video Curriculum (Lake Forest: Saddleback Church) 2002.

As your life get busier and noisier, it is necessary to regularly seek a quiet time when you can be still and come into the presence of God in a personal and intimate way. This three-week curriculum will help you and your small group members understand the predicament that keeps you from experiencing solitude with God, realize the priority of solitude for spiritual growth, and make a plan to experience personal time with God! Available at the weekend Small Group Curriculum table or from Saddleback's Maturity Team.

Satisfy Your Soul by Dr. Bruce Demarest (Colorado Springs: Navpress), 1999.

Find solid, biblical direction and personal insight as you join Dr. Bruce Demarest in his study of the life-long process of inner transformation. Gain a balanced, biblical understanding of Christian practices such as silence, meditation, contemplation, journaling, and spiritual direction. Filled with resource listings, deep personal application questions, and Bruce's story of his own contemplative journey.

Spiritual Trainer Challenge

Is the Holy Spirit encouraging you to be a Spiritual Trainer to another Christian in the area of spending time alone with God? Is someone in your family, small group, or ministry ready to take the next step in his or her spiritual walk? Would you like to share this booklet with a parent, child, sibling, friend, neighbor, or co-worker? If so, here are simple steps you can take:

Things You Can Do to Prayerfully Prepare for a Spiritual Training Appointment

1. Pick up a copy of *Life Training: Spiritual Habits* and read through it. This booklet will give you a good understanding of why it is important to develop spiritual habits like time alone with God, confession and repentance, prayer, Scripture memorization, worship, contentment, praying the names of God, etc. It will also give you some excellent advice on how to be a great trainer/discipler.
2. Ask someone if he/she (same-sex as yourself, unless it is a family member or your fiancé) would like you to disciple him/her using this booklet, *Time Alone With God*. Pick up a copy for that person. Set a date and time for a one-hour meeting—with a reminder to bring a Bible.
3. Re-read this booklet, *Time Alone With God*, paying special attention to how it is organized and what sections helped you the most.

Things to Do During the Appointment

Important Note: This lesson has five sections, each of which will take approximately seven minutes, plus a five-minute time of being alone with God. So, you will need approximately 40 minutes to cover the content of the lesson. **Please allow 50-60 minutes for the entire discipleship session, including fellowship and prayer requests.**

1. Open with a brief prayer and a few minutes of fellowship.
2. Read through the booklet with your trainee, taking turns sharing the reading. Ask your trainee the questions as you work through the material. Take your time; don't rush.
3. For the “Call to Action” section, slow the pace as you pray, answer any questions, and discuss the action steps, among which is an important Prayer of Commitment, as well as a five-minute practice session of a time alone with God.

Notes:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Thank you for using the Saddleback Church Spiritual Trainer Series materials entitled *Time Alone With God*. We hope that this has been a beneficial experience and has provided you with an opportunity to draw closer to God.

If you are interested in exploring more of the Saddleback Spiritual Trainer Series tools, please call the Maturity Team at Saddleback Church, (949) 609-8201.
www.saddleback.com/maturity