

SPENDING TIME WITH GOD

THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEACHING - As amazing as it may seem, this may be the most important teaching in the series. Healing truly does come through our relationship with Jesus, and this is where that relationship is formed. We challenge the participants to have a consistent quiet time, and we offer practical suggestions for making their quiet times really meaningful.

1. During these sessions we are talking about healing--that process of change wherein God does His work to undo the damage caused by what we have done and by what was done to us; the process whereby we really do start moving in a new direction. The first few weeks were aimed at discovering why we are the way we are and what it is about us that so strongly resists change. Hopefully, in the process, you have cleared some things out of your life that will free you to be more open to the Lord's healing process. Then, these last two weeks are intended to prepare you for moving forward.
2. Of course, most of you know that the Christian life is not laid out in such orderly steps, but the principles are always there. We are in the process of putting off and putting on, and somewhere in the midst of the process the power of God is at work to enable us to do those things that we could not otherwise do.
3. We are going to deal with what may be the most important thing that you can do to overcome addiction. That sounds like an extreme statement doesn't it? It is. Alan Medinger shares that when he started the New Directions program several years ago, he knew he had to include a session on spending time with God, but he expected it to be about the most difficult class in the series. What could be said that Christians don't already know. Everyone knows a Christian should spend some time in prayer each day. If they are already doing it, what's the point of the teaching, and if they are not, what can you say to get them to start? As it turned out, this is the class more than any other that people have come back later and said, "That teaching changed my life."
4. So here goes. I'm going to cover this subject by:
 - a. Sharing some personal experiences.
 - b. Offering some practical tips.
 - c. Talking about what happens when we do spend time with the Lord.
5. Most of us refer to the special time we spend with the Lord as a quiet time. It's that time that just

you and He spend together; a time set apart for prayer, meditation and Scripture reading.

6. Some of you already have a good quiet time with the Lord; some of you almost never have one. *[Ask for a show of hands]*. Asking this question usually reveals that the majority of Christians don't spend time with the Lord on a consistent basis.
 - a. If you already do, I hope some practical hints offered here will be of help.
 - b. For those of you who don't, my earnest prayer is that you will soon start. As I said, there is no more important thing that can do if you are serious about overcoming your addiction.

7. **PERSONAL TESTIMONY: SHARE ABOUT YOUR QUIET TIMES AND HOW THEY IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE.**

IF YOU DON'T HAVE A TESTIMONY IN THIS AREA YOU MAY SHARE AS FOLLOWS:

Let me share with you what Alan Medinger says about how his quiet times have impacted on him over the twenty years he has been a Christian:

This is one subject in this series--probably the only one--for which I can be like Paul and say, "I urge you then, be imitators of me." That sounds presumptuous, but by God's grace my quiet times are very consistent and wonderfully productive.

- a. I get up daily at 5:30 and have about 1-1/2 hours with the Lord almost every morning--probably six days a week.
- b. This is the most important time in my life.
- c. I'm convinced Regeneration would not exist, if I hadn't had this quiet time for many years.
- d. Here's what it does for me:
 - (1). It sets my focus for the day. He assumes His proper place in my life. Before anything else, I start by coming into the presence of my Lord.
 - (2). It sustains me through all circumstances. This is a difficult ministry, and I need the Lord every day. He is my boss, my counselor, my good friend who will just listen to my heart. I could not handle the difficulties of life and ministry without Him.
 - (3). It's the time that I am most likely to hear from God.

- (a). Conviction and admonition. My deeper sins--the kind we were talking about the past several weeks--have usually come home to me during my quiet time.
 - (b). Often He provides direction--either general or specific. Much of the planning for my ministry has come out of my quiet times.
 - (c). Often I experience His love and healing. Why not? It is the time I am closest to Him.
 - (d). My prayers come into line with His will. That takes time. When God promises to answer our requests, it is implied that they will be in accordance with His will. Mine often are not--at first. It takes time for the Holy Spirit to bring my prayers into line with His perfect will.
 - (e). Those early morning times often put me into a state of mind in which I can be creative, write, prepare teachings. I try not to allow my quiet times to be work times, but most of the good things I have ever written or the good things I have ever taught have come to me when I have been still before the Lord. Generally, these times are on His initiative.
- e. Other inputs in my life are important--from reading, hearing sermons, from other Christians--but nothing comes close to this. Most of the really significant spiritual breakthroughs in my life have occurred when I was alone in my living room between 5:30 and 7:00 a.m.
- f. Simply put, this is the time I talk to and listen to God--through Scripture, prayer and meditation.
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8. If most Christians know they should have a quiet time, why do so many fail to do it?
- a. First off there can be a real problem with priorities. In a person's heart, other priorities are really higher.
 - (1). Comfort--that warm bed on a cold winter morning
 - (2). Entertainment and pleasure--the late show, or the 10:00 o'clock news is really more important.
 - (3). Maybe its just busyness; that means that everything in your life is more important than spending time with God.

- (4). It can even be other people's needs, or "the Lord's work". What foolishness this can be. What is it one saint said, "I have so much to do, I have to spend four or five hours a day in prayer or I would never get it all done". If we are serving the Lord without spending real time with Him, we are clearly ministering out of our own strength.
 - b. Another problem can be with discipline; which almost inevitability means that you have an inability to defer the immediate good for the greater long term good. In business they call this "the tyranny of the urgent."
 - c. The problem might be the enemy. There is nothing Satan would rather do than keep you away from the Lord. Look out for circumstances that constantly deter you from a quiet time.
 - d. There may be something in your life that is making God unapproachable; maybe sin, or a deep father problem, or a problem with authority figures.
 - e. Finally, there is good old rationalizing and compromising: I pray in my car or I'm doing the Lord's work all day, I don't need a special time with Him.
9. Let's look at these obstacles and see how each one can be overcome.
- a. First, wrong priorities - In your homework there is an exercise that goes like this:
 - (1). List everything you do during a typical week day
 - (2). Scratch out those things that are necessary for survival, like eating, sleeping, other bodily functions, working and commuting to work.
 - (3). Now ask yourself: should anything left on this list be a higher priority than my time with the Lord? That includes: shopping, resting, taking care of your aged mother, reading the paper, going to church, even your involvement in the New Directions program.
 - b. What if the problem is simply a lack of self discipline? That's a tough one.
 - (1). I recommend finding a person to whom you can be accountable for this purpose. It could be someone in your small group.
 - (2). At the end of every day in which you did not have a quiet time confess that fact to God--but do it in a special way. Say, "Forgive me Father; I didn't think enough of

you today to spend some time with you.” Keep it up until the reality of it gets through to you.

- c. If you find you are rationalizing - Just try to be honest with yourself and the Lord and accept the fact that, as worthy and valuable as other parts of the Christian walk are, they cannot be a substitute for time, one-on-one, with the Lord.
 - d. If it looks like the enemy is trying to do a job on your quiet time, you will need to engage in spiritual warfare. Out loud, rebuke Satan and his tactics in the name of Jesus. Remember, he is a defeated enemy, and he is not a match for the power of Jesus.
 - e. If something is making God distant and unapproachable to you, you will need to find the reason for this--and you will. He wants to break down whatever barrier lies between you and Him more than you do. If such is the case, persist anyway. It is likely you will find some help as you continue on in this program.
10. Now let's discuss some suggestions for an effective quiet time
- a. When?
 - (1). Make it fit your bodily rhythms. I'm convinced there are morning people and evening people.
 - (2). Early morning is best if you can do it then. It makes it your first priority, and its less subject interruption.
 - (3). It has to be a fixed time, or in effect you are declaring that other things clearly have a higher priority. If it's “when you get to it” you are saying that almost everything else as a higher priority.
 - b. How long should it be?
 - (1). Here I may differ from others who would say, just start with ten minutes so you develop the habit. I don't believe that works. It takes time to come into the presence of the Lord--at least for most of us it does, and ten minutes isn't enough.
 - (2). You will find that a ten minute quiet time is almost meaningless, and so you won't have the incentive to keep it up. It needs to be long enough to enable you to quiet down and listen to the Lord. I suggest starting out with a half hour.
 - c. Where's the best place?

- (1). If at all possible, let it be in a private place; one where you can kneel, sing, praise God out loud.
 - (2). Make it a comfortable place and if possible the same place each day. The routine helps and it becomes your private meeting place with the Lord.
- d. What do you do in a quiet time?
- (1). Many people have written about this and there is much good advice out there. There is no single right way, but let me share with you what has worked for me.
 - (2). Begin with praise. Praise is the one thing we can do that focuses completely on the Lord. Praise can include words of praise, tongues, singing, reciting some of the Psalms of praise. Simply praising God verbally is difficult if you are not used to it. When you first start and your praise vocabulary is very limited all you may be able to say is: Praise you Lord, praise you Jesus, praise you Lord--over and over again. Eventually you will grow in your capacity to praise God, but meanwhile you can be quite certain He is pleased with your efforts.
 - (3). Then go to thanksgiving and confession. They too focus on the Lord, although not as much as praise, but they do put us in the right position with respect to the Lord; we are sinners who have so much to be thankful for. Then acknowledge Him as the source of everything we have, including His cleansing power.
 - (4). Intercession
 - (a). This can take over and become very routine.
 - (b). Some people find it helps to have daily requests and weekly requests. You probably would pray for your family and certain people who are close to you every day, but then there can be certain individuals you pray for on Mondays, others on Tuesdays, and so forth.
 - (c). It also can be helpful to have a sheet of specific requests on which you note the request and the date you started praying for it, and then note God's answer and the date. This can be a big faith builder.
 - (5). Reading Scripture. I recommend the use of a Scripture guide
 - (a). Without a guide, you may tend only towards the familiar, favorites.

- (b). Going straight through the Bible is good once in a while, but when you do this you are giving the same weight to the dimensions of the Tabernacle that you are giving to the 17th chapter of John..
 - (c). Most people use a guide that offers several readings from the Old and New Testaments each day. It may or may not offer a commentary.
 - (d). Let other resources be supplements, not substitutes for the Bible.
- (6). Petitions; these are intercessions for yourself.
- (a). I think it is good to do this after Scripture reading as we want our petitions to be in line with the Lord's will, and they are more apt to be so if we listen to Him first.
 - (b). It is O.K to ask the Lord for those things you desire. How sad any father would be if his son or daughter would not ask him for what is on his heart because he or she thought the father was too busy or didn't care.
 - (c). Don't over-spiritualize. God doesn't want you playing games with Him.
- (7). Keeping a journal [*How many of you kept a journal before you started New Directions?*] You should have all ready started keeping a journal with your New Directions Prayer Journal. Keep it up and make it permanent after New Directions.
- (a). A journal offers the best way to listen to God. It is a record of your life with God.
 - (b). It can be your key to spiritual growth.
 - (c). It is where you record what God has said or done in your life.
 - (d). It can keep you from going in circles, having to learn the same lessons over and over.
 - (e). It helps you to come to grips with your innermost life by capturing thoughts and emotions that are whirling around.
 - (f). It enables you to capture fears, hopes, etc., to make the vague specific. the nebulous concrete.

- (g). It is a wonderful way to measure progress.
- (8). Meditation
- (a). Meditation is different from prayer.
 - (b). It is simply coming into God's presence for no other purpose than to be with Him; thinking about Him, gazing on Him, sensing Him there with you.
 - (c). It is not easy. It is a discipline that has to be developed. It's not something most people do in every quiet time, because it often precludes everything else. Some guidelines for meditation are included in the Supplemental Materials section of your notebook.
- (9). This is a lot; perhaps more than you can accomplish in any session, but:
- (a). You don't have to do each of these things every day. Keep your times with the Lord lively by varying what you do from day to day.
 - (b). After a while you may find yourself wishing you had more time.
 - (c). Some of these ways (particularly thanksgiving and singing praise songs to Him) will help you through the dry times better than others.
 - (d). Stay flexible. It's okay to be flexible with a friend, and your being flexible will make it easier for the Holy Spirit to lead.
11. Don't despair during dry times. He is pleased that you want to spend the time with Him, and He will lead you out to greener pastures.
12. Having a meaningful quiet time will be the most important thing you can do in overcoming addictions. In your quiet time you are with:
- a. The wisest Counselor there could be.
 - b. The perfect Father.
 - c. The perfect Lover.
 - d. The One who truly can meet your every need.

Scripture Memory Verse:

Rev. 3:20 (NASB) Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me.

Assignment for the Week:

1. As described in section 9a of your outline, list all of the significant things you do during the week. Scratch out those that are needed for survival. Prayerfully consider which, if any, of those that remain should be more important than your time with God.

2. If you are not currently having consistent meaningful quiet times complete the following:

Lord, if possible, for at least the next ten week days I will spend a minimum of 30 minutes per day with You in prayer and Scripture reading. You will find me at:

Time _____ Location _____

Signature _____

3. You have been journaling using your New Directions Weekly Journal sheets. If you had not been journaling before, it is now time to start journaling more seriously. Get yourself a looseleaf binder or spiral notebook to start using as your permanent journal. Use it to record things that go beyond what you are writing as a part of New Directions. When you have completed New Directions, you might want to place the New Directions Weekly Journal sheets in your permanent Journal book.