

Quiet Time

by Harold Armstrong

The sermon emphasizes the importance of daily quiet time for cultivating an intimate relationship with God and experiencing spiritual growth.

Duration: 1:34:31

Scripture: Psalm 50:16

Topics: "Quiet Time"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal testimony of how his business has grown tremendously over the years, attributing it to his faith and prayer. He emphasizes that their business is a ministry and that all their transactions and interactions with customers and vendors are opportunities for ministry. The speaker encourages the audience to prioritize their relationship with God by dedicating time each day for prayer and reading the Bible. He references biblical examples of Moses spending extended time with God and encourages the audience to take their quiet time to a new level. The speaker also highlights the importance of discipline and stability in one's faith, drawing from various Bible verses.

Transcript

My name is Steve Trice and this is Harold Armstrong. The title of our session today is Quiet Time, Tapping the Power of God Within Us. This is going to be pretty scriptural based.

There's going to be a lot of scripture to this. Harold and I were both amazed when we started putting this together that the Lord has an awful lot to say about His desire to have intimacy with us. And He's also got a lot to say about our need for intimacy with Him and the power that we can get out of it.

So there's going to be a lot of scripture. So bear with us and you can just follow us as we go through. The foundational scripture that we chose for this was from 2 Peter 1, 3-8.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world caused by evil desires. For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness and to your goodness knowledge and to your knowledge self-control and to your self-control perseverance and to your perseverance godliness and to your godliness, brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I want to unpack that just a little bit. We could spend all day on those verses, but just a little bit.

Let's go back to the beginning and look particularly at the underlying portions. His divine power has given us what? Not a little, but everything. We need for two things, for life and for godliness, and where does it come from? From our knowledge of Him.

He has given us very great and precious promises so that, again, two things, that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world caused by evil desires. How do we get there? How do we get it? The next verse tells us. Action.

Make every effort to add to your faith goodness and so on and so on, and it's a building process, continually adding, making every effort. For you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being what? Ineffective and unproductive or non-fruit producing, in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. I said my name, I'm Steve Trice.

I'm from Oklahoma City. I'm married to my bride, Nianne. We've been married for 34 years.

We have two sons, 33 and 30. From a career standpoint, I steward a company in Oklahoma City called JASCO Products. We import consumer electronic accessories and home electrical products that we package under the GE brand name, and we distribute them to mass merchandisers throughout the Americas.

Ministry. I came to the Lord rather late in life, kind of through a midlife crisis. After finding out I had cancer and thought I was going to die, it took the Lord a lot to get my attention.

I'm thrilled to death today that I had cancer. I was 43 years old. My kids were almost grown, but the Lord chose that time in my life to call me in 1991.

I've been discipled consistently by two different men for the past 15 years. I enjoy a daily quiet time with Jesus almost every morning. I'm currently discipling four other men on a regular basis.

My wife and I attend Crossings Community Church in Oklahoma City. Hi, everybody. Good afternoon.

My name is Harold Armstrong, and my wife, Linda, and I live in Oklahoma City. Between us have five children and seven grandchildren. We are active members of Chapel Hill United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City.

We've both been in an accountability arrangement with our spiritual mentors for the past seven years. I've been mentoring or discipling other men for about that same length of time, and I'm currently discipling five guys on a weekly basis, and those five are discipling six others. Our ministry has been blessed by having spiritual reproduction to the fourth generation and beyond, and I've enjoyed the experience of having a consistent morning quiet time for the past 18 years.

I'm self-employed in the commercial real estate services business in Oklahoma City. I've really enjoyed the seminars I've gone to, the workshops and so forth. The one this morning by David and the speech last night by Kirk really both dovetail right into what we're talking about here today very nicely.

So if you've been to those, you've heard a part of what we have to say, but it'll just help reinforce the need for it. Our number one assumption here this afternoon, guys, is going to be that God wants to know us and he wants to have an intimate, personal relationship with us. Let me say at the outset here that I believe that a failure to know God and not a failure to know about God, but a failure to know God is at the key of every problem we have.

It's right at the heart. And conversely, knowing God is the key to every blessing of God in our lives. Last night we heard Kirk say, if you're not now having a daily quiet time with God, you're either in trouble or you're about to get in trouble, and I believe that.

Hosea 6.6 says, I want to show you love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want burnt sacrifices. In Philippians 3.8.11, Paul says, What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.

I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ. The righteousness that comes from God is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in death, and so somehow to attain the resurrection from the dead.

What does it mean, then, to know God? Well, I think it's clear in the book of 2 Peter and elsewhere in the scriptures that it's more than an intellectual knowledge, not just knowing about the facts. I'm sure you, as I, have known people who are very intellectual, sometimes with multiple degrees, that don't know God. Conversely, we have known people that may be illiterate, poorly educated, poverty-stricken, but know God very well.

The word know or knowledge, as used in 2 Peter and in other places in the scriptures, isn't talking about just a casual acquaintance or a distant knowledge. It's a thorough participation with the object of one's knowledge. There's a oneness, a union, an intimacy with that person.

Psalms 27.8 says, My heart has heard you say, Come and talk with me. And my heart responds, Lord, I am listening, I am coming. Matthew 22, 37, 38, Jesus said, I love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. There's an excerpt I'd like to share with you from the autobiography of George Mueller. It goes like this.

The first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day is to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about is not how much I might serve the Lord or how I might glorify the Lord, but how I might get my soul into a happy state and how my inner man might be nourished. He went on to say, How different when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning from what it is when without spiritual preparation, the service, the trials, and the temptations of the day come upon me.

If the desire of our heart is to have an intimate, personal, vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ, have peace and joy, we need to know God. If we want to know God, we need to be in His Word. I'll talk about that just a little bit later on.

One of my life verses, I think you have it there, and you're probably going to hear more about this, is Matthew 6.33. And I would venture to say it's yours also. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. And, men, that's at the heart of what we're

going to be talking about here this afternoon, putting God first in our lives.

I know this verse of Scripture has got some special meaning to Steve as well, and I hope we have time for him to share that with you later today. Thank you, Harold. You know, guys, God does have a desire for intimacy with us, and He's created in us a need for intimacy with Him.

But that intimacy doesn't come out of our strength. There are probably some guys sitting here that don't have a daily quiet time with God. Hear about this daily quiet time with God, like to find a way to get started, probably started several times like a New Year's resolution.

It doesn't come out of our strength. It's not going to get done that way. It comes out of our weakness.

Job 20.20 tells us, Because He knew no quiet within Him, He does not retain anything He desires. Generally, our business busyness in the face of this busy world, it seems to us to be getting faster and faster all the time. I don't care whether you're in school or whether you're in business.

It's probably going pretty fast, isn't it? Not a lot of time, you know. We don't know quiet within us. We get up in the morning, and our thoughts are just running.

Our thoughts are racing through the evening. Very difficult to have a quiet time with God. Job 3.26 tells us, I'm not at ease, nor am I quiet, and I'm not at rest, but turmoil comes.

Psalms 42.5a. Why are you in despair, O my soul? Why have you become disturbed within me? When problems come, guys, we don't have a sufficient quiet time with our Lord. We have no depth of peace. We don't have understanding, no deep root in the Lord, to be able to abide, stand, and effectively deal with the adversity that He allows to come into our lives for our testing.

As we go about our daily tasks, schoolwork, our relationships with our wives, our children, our friends, we've squeezed God out in so many instances. Or, just as bad, like the New Year's resolution, we're trying to squeeze Him in. Oh, we'll just give God a few minutes.

Give Him a little sliver of our time. Then Proverbs 14.12 tells us, There's a way that seems right to a man. Busyness, all the things we've got to do.

But in the end, its way is death. And we know that in that context, the Lord's telling us that death means what? Separation in our relationship with God. There's a whole lot of things about there's a way that seems right to a man that can end in eternal death.

But even us as Christians, there's a way that seems right to us. Busyness seems right. But in the end, if it's all busyness, we'll have separation from God.

We get up in the morning. We rush through the shower. We pat the kids, glance at the newspaper, and run out the door to school or jobs.

Without even eating breakfast or, like me, gosh, got to grab a bite on the way to work. Work all day at a hectic pace with the pressures of business and school and deadlines. We come home to carpooling, diapers, and fast food dinner.

And then we sit down to mind-numbing TV so that we can go to bed, we can get rested and sleepy, and go to bed and get up and do it all over again. Stress, stress, and more stress. And God says to us as

Christians in Romans 12, 1 and 2, Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, for this is your spiritual act of worship.

And here's the key. Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world. That's what everybody else does.

Don't be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to what? Test and prove what God's will is, His good, pleasing, and perfect will. If we don't do that, then Paul tells us in Galatians 3, 3, Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit? Remember, guys, when we were brand-new baby Christians? Remember how exciting that was? Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit? Are you now being perfected by the flesh? Won't happen.

We have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We attend church. In fact, some of us are at church every time the doors open.

We serve in worthwhile projects. We feed the poor. But what are our priorities day by day? Are we Sunday Christians or Saturday? Some of us are Saturday night Christians now.

Are we Saturday night or Sunday Christians, maybe Wednesday night Christians? What do we do on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday? We got that compartmentalized over here? Is our business life separate, our school life separate from what we do on Sundays? Jesus said in John 15, 4 through 8, Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, and you are the branches.

He who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit. For apart from Me, you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, and he is thrown away as a branch and dries up, and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father has glorified this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. The word abide, guys, is used there seven times.

In the Greek, it's pronounced mino. It means to dwell, to endure, to be present, to remain, to stand. A lack of movement, standing, resting, enduring the silence.

Think of the branch of a tree or the branch of a vine. Disconnect it from the tree. How long will it continue to bear fruit? It won't bear fruit.

It can't bear fruit. How long before it dries up and shrivels and is good for nothing but to be just thrown in the fire and burned up? Psalm 1, 2, and 3 tells us that His delight is in the law of the Lord. And in His law, He meditates day and night.

And He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. We've got to abide in the Word. We've got to be in the Word day and night.

Where do you think the stress in our life comes from? Does it come from... I used to have a lot of depression in my 30s before I came to know Christ. I probably had four to five bad days a week. I'd wake up fuzzy-headed, overwhelmed.

I could put on a smile at work and convince people that... You know, you ask me how things are going today. Oh, fantastic! I was sick inside. I had my ladder up against the wrong wall.

I thought I had success, had business success, had a great family. Everything was great. And I was all messed up inside.

I was blaming my business. I was blaming my wife, my children, all the challenges of the day. I didn't have a peace inside of me.

I wasn't connected to the vine. We'll blame everything outside of us when we run into those difficulties, when we run into those stress points in life. I don't... I averaged through my 30s probably four bad days a week.

I didn't get over depression by taking pills. I don't have depression in my life anymore. Do I ever have a bad day? Yeah, I have a bad day once in a while.

Very seldom. I live in Jesus Christ. I start out my days with Him.

I put on the full armor of God, and that's gone. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 7-1, Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Galatians 5, 16, and 17 says, But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit. Cause that depression. And the Spirit against the flesh.

For these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. So how do we take the action to walk by the Spirit when we are seemingly pulled in so many directions with so much distractions and busyness? It's about prayer. As Moses prayed in Psalm 90, 12-17, So teach us to number our days, that we may present to you a heart of wisdom.

Do return, O Lord, how long will it be, and be sorry for your servant. So satisfy us in the morning with your loving kindness, that we may sing for joy and be glad all of our days. Make us glad according to the days you have afflicted us, and the years we have seen evil.

Let your work appear to your servants and your majesty to their children. Let the favor of our Lord God be upon us, and confirm for us the work of our hands. Yes, confirm the work of our hands.

I don't mean to tell you guys there's anything wrong with work. We work hard around our place, but we don't go to work until we put on the full armor of God, and I can't tell you how much more effective our work is once we've done that in our quiet time in the morning. The key to having the motivation and doing it is prayer.

If we foster an attitude of prayer and dependence upon Him, He'll provide the motivation, and He'll provide the desire of our hearts. Let me share one thing with you. I was a poor student.

I was a C.D. student all the way through high school. I made a 1.38 my first semester at OU, and God just rolled His eyes, and that was back during the Vietnam days. Praise the Lord.

There may be some Vietnam vets here, and I hope you don't take offense at this, but praise the Lord that I had a physical deferment, because it wasn't because I was a good student. They told me that OU was the

number one party school. I didn't care too much about football back then.

I just wanted to go party. Did graduate from there, though, finally. Was not a good reader.

The course that I hated the most was history. Couldn't stand history. Hated to read.

The heaviest reading I did after I got out of school until I was 40 was I'd probably read one Sidney Sheldon-type novel a year. Pretty light stuff, but only one book a year. And now today, I spend two and a half hours in a history book every morning.

That's not me. That's not the Steve Trice that I knew when I came to Jesus. That'd be the history book you're talking about.

This is the history book I'm talking about. I started praying. Had a spiritual mentor and learned to pray.

God, provide me with the time. Provide me with the motivation because I'm not motivated to do this. This is not what I like to do.

I used to look at the Bible sometimes and fall immediately to sleep. So I'm not a good reader. Pray.

Jesus told us there is a narrow gate and there's a wide gate in this world. Matthew 7, 13, and 14 tells us, Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.

For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. John 10, 10, The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy. I come that they may have life and have it more abundantly.

Man, the gate of being Christ's disciple is small. There are only a few people in this world that are called to do what you and I and Harold are called to do. Most people are going through the other gate.

Most Christians aren't going through the narrow gate of discipleship and spending the great quantities of time that it takes to really get to know the Lord well and then turn around and do his will in their life and live that fulfilled life that he promised us in John 10, 10. We all know Christians that aren't having the abundant life. We all know Christians, we talked about the divorce rates, same in the church as it is outside the church.

Why? Because we're not living close to God. We must learn to abide in, spend a good quiet time with God every day, or we cannot be productive with him and will regularly find ourselves in despair over our circumstances, blaming and looking in all the wrong places. Psalm 46, 10a says, Be silent and know that I am God.

Psalm 119, 114 says, You're my place of quiet retreat. I wait for your word to renew me. Psalm 107, 30 says, Then they were glad because they were quiet.

So he guided them to their desired haven. Our desired haven is peace, understanding, and to see him working through us to accomplish his plan in our lives and his plan, his will on this earth. But it only comes out of intimacy with him.

God has a great desire for intimacy with him. We have an overwhelming need for him. Through intimacy with God, we grow in him and we become of use for him and we prosper in all that we do.

Harold? Well, we're going to talk for a couple of minutes about hindrances to an intimacy with God. And I was just standing here thinking, Steve, this day could have been a hindrance to intimacy with God. And we really appreciate these guys coming over here to share this time with us.

For those of you listening on audio, we're sitting in a room with everybody with their coats and caps on, some with gloves on and a fireplace going. And it's a chilly day in Wichita Falls. And our thanks to Dick Wiggner for going down and fetching some wood for us downtown to bring it out or we wouldn't be as warm as we are.

Hindrances. Of those of you who now have a daily quiet time, have you ever said to yourself or to others, I don't want to be legalistic about my quiet time. I don't want to do it just to be doing it.

Well, we need to understand, I think, guys, that there's a very fine line that runs very deep between legalism and discipline. The activities we're talking about here this afternoon don't buy us favor with God. In his book, *Personal Disciplemaking*, Christopher Adsit says, God doesn't love me anymore when I'm faithful in my prayer life.

Reading the Bible every day doesn't mean that I earn brownie points with God. We can't have the attitude that I witnessed to somebody today, Lord, so now you've got to help me with that promotion. That's legalism, trying to buy God's favor through good works, and it can't be done.

In the first place, we should obey him, no questions asked, simply because he's our Lord, Luke 17, 7, 10. He's already lavishing us with 100% of his favor ever since he met us as sons and daughters. One can't expect more than 100%, can one? He goes on to say, we engage in the disciplines of Christianity as a result of self-control, a ninth component of the fruit of the Spirit.

Reading the Bible, praying, and so forth won't buy us any special privileges with God, but they will help us function better and more efficiently in the spiritual realm. And in the long run, they help us become more like Jesus. If we exclude those disciplines for fear that we might slip into legalism, we can be sure, based on the word of God, that we aren't going to function well.

So, if we can accept the fact that God eagerly, desperately, wants to have an intimate, personal relationship with us, and that's our desire, to have that type of relationship with him, how do we do that? How do we, as busy people, living fast-paced, complicated lives, facing relentless pressures, consistently have that intimacy and that great intimate walk with God? What hindrances come to your mind as you think about having a daily quiet time? Being tired? Yeah? Not enough time? Go to bed late? Yeah? Some of the ones I wrote down you can probably identify with, like you say, sleep, the alarm clock, newspaper, kids, wife, breakfast, rush to work, cell phone, email, blackberries, trade papers, meetings, busyness, trials and tribulations of our days, TV, magazine, books, sports activities. Then there are the roles as son, husband, father, grandfather, uncle, employee, friend, citizen, church leader, minister, community leader. So there are a myriad of things, most of which, individually, are good things.

But if they're keeping us from that intimacy that we need and desire, then they can all of a sudden not be a good thing. Just as Steve said, I think, earlier, if we're not careful and intentional, we are consistently and self-consciously either squeezing God out or, for that matter, trying to squeeze Him in. We have a choice,

kind of like Mary and Martha in the Bible.

You all remember the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10, 38, 42. The busyness of the world distracted Martha. Mary's desire was to focus on Christ and His plan for her.

She knew that soon enough she would be working again, no big deal. And Jesus commended Mary for that choice. And then in the parable of the sower, you may recall, Matthew 13, 22, 23, And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and brings forth some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. And guys, I think we'd all down deep like to say we'd like to be good soil, wouldn't we? So if you find your spiritual relationship with the Father to be kind of less than what you would like for it to be, maybe it's time to do a spiritual assessment on your life. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 13, 5, Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith.

Test yourselves. Your spiritual life may be in need of some major changes. My experience has been that God doesn't let me stay at the same level of commitment or intensity for very long.

Periodically, I can kind of sense Him having a desire for me to be changing direction, purpose, and or commitment. It's kind of like, come up another notch. You know, you've stayed there in that complacent role too long.

Let's move up a little higher. So I think it's safe to say that hindrances in our time with God will always be a major effect of life. That's not going to go away.

But if our goal is intimacy with God, spiritual disciplines are the key, guys. Let's talk a little bit about purpose and the power of spending time alone with God. What's it all about? You know, when we get up, get ready to go to school or to work in the morning, would any of us walk out the door naked? No clothes? Not this morning.

Thank you, Harold. Appreciate that. I don't think most of us walk out naked on a summer day.

Of course we wouldn't. But we're told in Scripture to put on the full armor of God. I wonder what the full armor of God is all about.

If we don't put on the full armor of God that he talks to us about in Ephesians 6, we don't even recognize the spiritual battles that are going on around us. We don't recognize in the conversation that we have with another person the spiritual issues that are going on. If we do have on the full armor of God, we have the ability not only to recognize spiritual issues that are going on around us, but we have the ability to deal with them, to turn them over to God and to let God deal with them.

And those issues that we have in anger and frustration and acting out and the way we talk, God starts to deal with that in our lives and we start to change. We also are not, we can't help ourselves, and we also, you know, we're charged with helping other people deal with the spiritual battles and the sin issues that are going on in their lives. We're not equipped.

We can't do it if we're not plugged in, if we're not spending time with God. Let's go, let's read Ephesians 6, 10 through 17. Finally, be strong in the Lord in the strength of His might.

Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, having done everything to stand firm.

Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with the truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace and take up the shield of salvation. In addition to all, take up the shield of faith, I'm sorry, with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

And the next verse is pray. Pray at all times in the Spirit. It's not printed on there.

Pray and put on the full armor of God. To begin our day or walk out the door without having a quiet time with God is like going out undressed or even worse. We are told clearly here that we need much more than the clothes that we wear to fight the spiritual battles that rage around us.

We need God's armor as our covering. To spend adequate amounts of time alone with God to gain knowledge of Him and to listen to His plan for our lives requires that we become disciplined disciples. Disciples, discipline, disciplined disciples.

Listen to the word discipline and the importance God places on our lives in the following verses. By the way, Harold mentioned it earlier, some people, as an excuse for not being disciplined disciples of Christ, call the disciplines that we go through, call those disciplines legalism. Always think about that.

Is that an excuse or is that real? Let's see what God says. Psalm 50, 16, and 17. But to the wicked God says, What right have you to tell my statutes and to take my covenant into your mouth? For you hate discipline and you cast my words behind you.

You don't have time for me. Proverbs 6.23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light and reproofs for discipline are the way of life. Proverbs 13.18 Poverty and shame come to him who neglects discipline, but he who regards reproof will be honored.

Proverbs 23.12 says, And apply your heart to discipline and your ears to words of knowledge. 1 Corinthians 9.24-27 Paul tells us, Do you not know that those who run the race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things.

Then they do it to receive a perishable reef, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way as not without aim. I box in such a way as not beating the air.

And I discipline my body and make it a slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. Colossians 2.4-5 For even when I am absent in the body, nevertheless I am with you in the spirit, rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. Discipline, stability, and faith in Christ.

1 Timothy 4.7-8 I'm not going to read 9 and 10. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. Now look here, we all know that we need exercise.

We're told every day on TV we need to exercise, right? On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. The world places a really heavy emphasis on exercise, and I exercise every day, and exercise is extremely important, but godliness, discipline for godliness, is a whole lot more important than that exercise.

The result of our disciplining ourselves to abide in Him and spend time with Him daily and throughout our days is that God's power and the fruit of Christ's spirit will reside and be unleashed in us. We all know Acts 1.8. Would you all read it with me? Say it with me. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Do you really want to be God's witnesses by example? Your family, your work, school? We talk about it. Do we really want to be there? We've got to be in God's Word. You're modeling, guys, to your family.

You're modeling to your children. You're modeling to your friends. But you can't model if you're not in God's Word because He can't work through you if you're not in His Word.

Galatians 5.22 and 23, we all know it, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. That's what we want. To experience the power of God and to know the fruit of His Spirit in His life, we must get up every morning, every morning, and put on the full armor of God.

I want to talk about the need for a morning daily quiet time. Guys, I've discipled a lot of guys over the last probably 13 years, and most of them have tried to tell me, well, I get it done. You know, I get it done at night.

I kind of catch up on Saturdays a little bit once in a while. I get it done. Let's look at the Scripture and see what it says.

Psalms 5.3, In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice. In the morning I will order my prayer to you and eagerly watch. Psalm 88.13, But I, O Lord, have cried out to you for help, and in the morning my prayer comes to you.

Psalms 119.147, I rise before dawn and cry for help. I wait for your words. What did our Lord do? In Mark 1.35, Jesus said, In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus didn't say it, Mark said it, sorry.

In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place and was praying there. Luke 4.42 tells us, At daybreak, Jesus went out from Peter's house to a solitary place. The Scripture is complete, man.

Jesus, the God-man, who changed the course of the history of the world, did so not because He was God, but because in His humanness, He went and spent time, quality time, extended time, early morning time, with the Father, so that He could be equipped to deal with all the issues that He'd face in His day. He then had all the power to fight the spiritual battles and to help others. Regarding the morning quiet time, Henry Blackaby says, If you do not have time in your quiet time with God by getting up at 7 o'clock, then get up at

6. And if you can't get it done at 6, then get up at 5. And if 5 doesn't work, try 4. And if 4 doesn't work, you might want to try midnight.

But the quiet time is essential in our walk with Jesus Christ. Daily, in the morning. Guys, we've got to do it.

Steve, one of the tapes that we use in *Discipling Men* is done by Steve Oldford. And a comment that he makes in that tape has always stayed with me. He says, Of all the things he does, and he's a pastor, the most important part of his day is his quiet time.

And he said, Conversely, he's convinced that the first thing Satan wants to take from him is his quiet time. Because if he can disrupt his relationship, his intimacy with Christ early in the morning, and get him off on another track, and do that very consistently, it's just a matter of time until he has robbed him of his intimacy. The daily quiet time.

Now, let's talk for a second about developing methods and application and maybe accountability. Matthew 6.6 says, Here's what I want you to do. Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role play before God.

Just be there as simply and honestly as you can imagine, or as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace. That's the phrase out of the message.

But I thought it really spoke to what we're saying here today. Prior to making a commitment to a daily morning time with God, some 18 years ago, my morning reading time was a lot like Steve's. First thing I would do would be go out and get the Daily Oklahoma and begin to devour the front page, the business section, fret over the stock market, and, of course, the sports section.

And I really couldn't imagine beginning my day any other way. But during this period of time, my wife and I were involved in an in-depth study of the Old Testament in our church. And I would hear people in the Bible study talk about reading through the Bible.

And I had heard that before, and the whole challenge of reading through the Bible became kind of real to me. Frankly, I couldn't imagine anyone just sitting down and reading the Bible. I had several Bible studies and had read different sections of the Bible, but never had read the entire Bible.

So the first time I tried that, I used the one-year Bible. Anybody ever use the one-year Bible? That is an excellent way, I think, to begin reading through the Bible if you haven't done it before. Then for several years, I used a daily reading schedule and read the NIV study Bible the first thing each morning.

And then I would also read from a daily devotional, and the one I really used probably the most consistently for the longest period of time was *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers. It's really fantastic if you've never used it. For the past several years, I've been using what's called the Victory Bible Reading Plan.

It schedules the Old Testament reading in sequence in which the events occurred in the Old Testament along with a psalm or a proverb, and then the Gospels. You go through the Gospels twice during the year. There are several really good reading plans to choose from, but Steve and I both strongly recommend that you use a specific plan and stick with it if you want to faithfully and systematically read the entire Bible on a yearly basis.

I've found, and I think Steve has too, that recording the highlight of the day's reading is very helpful. Some recommend journaling in different ways. I enjoy sharing from these Bible reading highlights with some of the men I meet with.

Dick and I meet together, and we'll oftentimes look at each other and say, What's God been saying to you? And then we'll refer back to the Bible reading highlights to kind of get an idea about what the highlights have been over the last week or so. This is very important and I think beneficial. It also, as you are reading, helps you stay focused a little bit more because you're reading and you're thinking, Okay, what is God saying to me this morning? And what am I going to record in my journal or in my Bible reading highlight? Invariably, guys, when I get into a serious discussion about my quiet time with someone, it seems like they ask me, You know, how do you do that? How can you get committed? How can you read the Bible through each morning for 18 years? And I told someone the other day as we were talking about that, I said, You know, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior when I was 9 years old.

And my mom and dad were just outstanding Christian role models. My mother is almost 90 years old, and she's a real prayer warrior to this day. And I'm confident that I wouldn't be standing here before you today if her intercessory prayers hadn't been given on my behalf over the years.

So I think about speaking of my little mother who is now my dad passed away three years ago, and my mother is in a nursing center in Oklahoma City. And it's become my responsibility to kind of be her primary caregiver, manage her health care. And, frankly, it takes a lot more time and energy than I ever thought it would.

And many, many days when I think about going to see her, I struggle with having the time, carving it out, you know, either having it or just taking the time. And not every day, but many days. But, you know, guys, when I get there and I see her sweet little face and she looks up at me and she says, Son, I sure have been hoping you'd come by to see me today.

I'm so glad you're here. I mean, phew, all that fret's gone, and I'm just so glad I was there. And invariably I'm really blessed.

And, really, I think the quiet time is a lot like that. I'd have to say that not every night am I just all fired up about setting the alarm clock, especially if I've got a 6 or 6.30 meeting in the morning, and you have to back that up an hour and a half or so so you're getting up at 3.45 or 4 or whatever it is. But, you know, as soon as my feet hit the floor in the morning, I thank the Lord for the good night's rest and the health and strength to get up, and Matthew 6.33 rings through my mind, and I make my way to my secluded place and begin my quiet time.

And I think sometimes, guys, just in the spirit, I can almost hear God say the same thing that Mother said, and that's, Harold, I'm glad you made the effort to be with me this morning. I'm looking forward to our time together. I heard Grant Humphrey say this week at a meeting that we were in, he said, and you probably have heard this, kind of resonated with me, he said, we may start in the flesh with our quiet time, but we wind up in the spirit.

I think you all have probably experienced that as well. When I first started my walk with Christ, or as he first started his walk with me, my spiritual mentor, my spiritual father, got me to memorize, as Harold mentioned earlier, Matthew 6.33, but seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you as well. And I did discipline myself to start, as he asked me to do, open my eyes in the

morning and say, thank you for that good night's rest, Father.

And then, invariably, and I don't know whether it was a little bit by his conjoling and a little bit me, but mostly the Holy Spirit, I'd be on my way to the bathroom, and I'm thinking about, ah, the newspaper and all the things that I want to do today, and trying to get awake, and suddenly, let's seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. Oh, and I really didn't want to do that. And I'd go in, and I'd do my thing in the bathroom, and then let's seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.

And so I know that I had to go spend time along with God. And it's not what I wanted to do at first, but I would. And it was discipline, and it was tough.

But almost immediately, the Holy Spirit started to work in me, and it started to change, and I started having great quiet times with God, little by little. And also I had to meet with my mentor every Wednesday morning at 630, and he was going to ask me about my quiet times. And so that was encouraging also.

Steve, I think one thing you and I both have found is that we try not to get diverted by picking up the paper first or checking our e-mails or doing some little something that pulls us off course. I've got to tell you guys, I still take the Daily Oklahoman. It sits on our counter a lot.

I used to think that I had to read the newspaper to keep up. We run a pretty good-sized business. We ship about 60 million pieces of GE products a year.

And I seldom ever read the newspaper. I seldom ever read the Wall Street Journal. I do keep up with our ñ I am a slow reader.

I do keep up with our industry's trade papers fairly well. But there's not a lot in the newspaper that affects my life, I've learned. But that book, this book, is all about my life.

It affects everything in my life. I love being here. I don't need that other.

It's fun to read, but it doesn't have much to do with my life. I'll give you an example of my quiet time. I get up, I start in prayer.

And by the way, I used to start ñ I'm going to tell you how the quiet time has expanded. But I used to start with about seven minutes. I tried seven minutes with God.

Harold will talk more about that in a few minutes. But as I prayed to God to give me the time and to give me the motivation, I started having mountaintop experiences. And I've been up there with John and with Peter and with Moses and with Elijah, sitting there on that mountain watching Jesus and the transfiguration.

And I can tell you that I have experienced that. In my quiet time, sitting there reading it and just imagining it and meditating on it and thinking about it and not wanting to get down off that mountain. And then suddenly Jesus says, ìt's time to go to work, Steve.

I've prepared you for the day. Now get out and get back down in the valley and go to work.î But you start experiencing those things, and it starts to become the joy of your heart. I get down on my knees.

I go to my closet. You've heard about the prayer closet. I go to my closet.

It's where I keep my clothes. And I get down on my knees, and sometimes I get on my face, and I pray there. You don't have to get on your knees, but I think that's an exercise of humility before God.

And you can't see my knees, but they're rough, and they're rougher than the bottoms of my feet because I spend a lot of time on my knees in the morning. Then I go get on my exercise bike. The two most difficult things for me are exercise and memorizing Scripture.

So I have a stationary exercise bike, and I take my computer with all my Scripture in it, and I memorize Scripture while I'm riding my bike. I do my back review, and I do my current review, and I memorize about two new Scriptures on average a week. I read.

I then get off the bike. I go get my coffee. I go get in my favorite comfortable chair, and I read and study, and I pray through the Scriptures.

I meditate, and then I do an application. I try, and I don't always get this done, but I try to. I take what I've read, and then I ask myself the questions.

What impressed me most? Where do I fall short? And what will I prayerfully do about it this week to change? And I maintain a check chart, and Dick's handing those out. Again, people that want to have an excuse for not doing this call this legalism. Habits are hard to change.

God wants us to have a vertical relationship with Him and horizontal relationships with others, and I learned a long, long time ago that I wasn't going to be able to exercise, go to a health club, unless I had somebody to meet me at that health club to hold me accountable. We've all been through the accountability process in exercise. Well, I've got a spiritual mentor that holds me accountable for my check chart, and I've got across the top, the first page is an example, guys, and it's my example.

The second page is a blank, so you can use your own if you want to. But across the top, it tells you the disciplines. Read and study, pray AM, pray PM, new scripture memory verses, how many do I do, current review, back review, one-on-one discipleship meetings, applications, application prayers, devotions with my wife, exercise, praying for my ten most wanted, guys that I have a burden on my heart, that I want to come to Christ, I want to pray for them on a daily basis.

Oh, Harold's going to pass those out. And then the sin issues in my life. You want to have victory over sin? We all have a lust issue.

I used to, I couldn't count the lustful thoughts that I had in a day. So I put, you know, I started trying to count them, and the goal was zero, okay? And I started trying to count my lustful thoughts. And I'd think when I'd get on my knees in the morning, I'd keep short accounts with God, and I'd tell Him about the lustful thoughts that I could remember from the previous day, and I'd ask Him to give me victory over them.

And I'd keep track of how many lustful thoughts. Now, I've got to tell you, not that I'm at zero every week, but you watch it go from tens or hundreds down to ten, and down to eight, and down to five, and to three, and to two, and you get a zero. You start getting victories.

You start getting little victories. And I do it with pride, and I do it with selfishness, and just work on the different sin areas of your life. And you have a goal across there.

These are my goals, not yours. But a goal across there, and those are number of times or number of days, and then a standard. The goal is what I'm trying to achieve.

The standard is what I've got to maintain. And then down the side, the dates. And those dates are weeks.

I do that a week at a time. And at the end of the week, I recap for the week, and I enter it. So anyway, if you want to use a check chart, there's a blank one.

Please don't use mine. Use your own. Work it out with your spiritual mentor.

Same spiritual mentor that Steve and I have. Every six months has us draw a line, and we'll do a percentage. How many times during that past six months did I meet the goals and objectives that I chose? He merely just helps us stay accountable.

But to be accountable over a six-month period, 20% of the time I did this, 80% of the time I did that. It gives you a picture, a visual, of how close you came to keeping your goals and standards. You've heard Gene Warr mentioned several times.

I didn't work with Gene, but I've heard guys tell me that Gene says, You know this life with Christ? I hope you didn't take it lightly when you prayed to receive Jesus, because when you pray to receive Jesus, He's going to take your whole life. There's going to be some things about your life with Christ that are going to be rather shocking. And if you don't want Him to change you radically, don't get on your knees and start praying, Give me the motivation and give me the time.

When I started getting on my knees and saying, Lord, give me the motivation and give me the time, I thought He might expand my seven-minute quiet time to 15 or 30. I thought maybe that might come out of my business day, or maybe it'd come at night, or maybe it'd come on Saturdays. I didn't know what it was going to do.

I suddenly one day started waking up at 4 a.m. 4 a.m. I don't use an alarm clock. I wake up at 4 a.m. almost every single day of my life. And I started waking up at 4, and the first few mornings I just lay there.

I thought, you know, I'm just having a bad night. 4 a.m. I wake up every morning. I get up out of that bed, and today I get up out of that bed with joy, and I go when I get rolling, and I spend about two and a half hours with God every day of my life putting on the full armor.

I want to share with you some changes that have happened in my life. I went through a lawsuit for six years. I was trustee of some young lady's trust, good, great family friends.

A man asked me if I'd be a trustee of his trust. I made a mistake and said yes. I didn't prayerfully work through that one.

He had a multimillion-dollar trust. He was very giving to his family, spoiled the daylights out of his adult daughters, and he just kept giving the money and giving the money and giving the money. When he passed away, suddenly I've got this agreement, this trust agreement.

I can't do what he did. I can't give it away and give it away and give it away. I've got to do exactly what this document says, and what he did when he wrote the trust, he did what he should have done 20 years before with them that he didn't do, and suddenly I'm faced with this, and I step into his shoes as his trustee.

It wasn't long before they sued me for breach of trust. My wife and I had a lawsuit that was just about a little more than our net worth. And when you start, and I don't know if you've ever been sued, but when you read what the attorney from the other side writes and says, and he gives you all the cases and da-da-da, and you start reading it, and your attorney's telling you, well, you're okay, you're okay.

You might want to settle, but you're okay. And then you read what he writes, and you say, wait a minute. Am I okay? Did somehow, did I violate something? Is there a little clause here that's going to get me? Is there going to be a jury that's going to look at me and say that I did this wrong? Six years.

By the way, I love these ladies. But I got real angry. Six years they kept me in court.

And I had a lot of worry. I had a lot of issues. You can imagine how my wife was feeling during those times and the anger and the frustration.

I learned during the process, I learned more about forgiveness on my knees with God in my daily quiet time. I forgave them before we ever went to court. We finally did go to court.

We were exonerated. There was never an issue or a problem there. That lesson in forgiveness, I now, for two years, in conjunction with another woman and a counselor, I disciplined one of those young ladies.

And, by the way, don't get me wrong here. I'm not disciplining a young lady one-on-one by myself. Disciplining her in conjunction with a counselor.

Have a great relationship today with that particular young lady. We can learn to forgive. We can lead other people to the Lord.

God does that. That comes out of the quiet time. One other quick business one.

In 1997, our business was 24 years old. It was a fairly mature business in a fairly mature market. We had let some asset-based things get out of control.

We had way too much inventory and the wrong stuff. And we suddenly became unbankable. And we're not able to borrow money easily.

And, at the same time, our customer base started telling us that it was going to take a top-tier name brand on our products. We didn't have a top-tier name brand. That was Sony, Panasonic.

It took one of those kind of brands to get it. I didn't know any of those people. They don't lend their brands out anyway.

And so I went to my knees. I said, Lord, it's your business. I just steward it for you.

That's very freeing, by the way. I just steward the business for you. They want a top-tier name brand.

We can't borrow money. If I showed somebody our financial statement, they probably wouldn't want us to have their brand today anyway. It's your business.

Are you ready for us to go out of business? Is it your plan to bankrupt this? It's not what I want to happen. But it may be your will. And I said, you know, show me what you want me to do.

Guys, I can't tell you the circumstances. I could spend all day telling you the myriad of about 500 or 600 circumstances, a puzzle that just all started to come together. We now have the number, not a top-tier name brand, the number one brand in the entire world for all of our products categories, not only that but the General Electric Company has now sold us a division of their company, their home electrical products business, and we moved it to Oklahoma City.

So we have all of the consumer electronic accessories and all of the home electrical products for Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central and South America exclusively. And we have all the rights to do the product and develop the product ourselves and GE oversees it and so on. Tremendous story.

Our business has grown nine times in the last six years. I spend a lot of time on my knees and God does great things. Our business is a ministry.

All those transactions, everything we do with selling all those products, 60 million pieces a year through the Walmarts and the Home Depots and Lowe's and all those Best Buy and all those people merely facilitates the ministry, the ministry in our company in Oklahoma City, in our company in Shenzhen, China and Hong Kong and Taiwan and through our customers and through our vendors. It's all about ministry and the Lord blesses it every day. Guys, application.

If you haven't already written it down, memorize Matthew 6.33. Discipline yourselves to get out of bed in the morning. Make an appointment with God. Get up at least 15 minutes earlier than you used to.

Pray to him for the motivation and the time. If you don't have a disciple making mentor or accountability partner, get one and ask him to hold you accountable for your quiet time and not only for your quiet time but for the disciplines also. Pray, read, study, memorize, meditate and apply the word of God to your life.

Do it daily and join Jesus and he will show you the most revolutionary plan for your life beyond your most vivid imagination. I had no plan when I started a little company in 1975 in 1,400 square feet to be occupying 609,000 square feet today and growing by leaps and bounds. Guys, I've been in an intense Bible study with Steve for about seven plus years and I can testify to what he's saying.

Many times he would bring those prayer requests to our group and we would be in unison praying for things that Steve needed. He needed mountaintops. He needed mountains moved, not just hills.

I mean, these were big, big decisions. But I was thinking, Steve, as you were talking, if you went into his operation into JASCO there in Oklahoma City, they have new beautiful new offices and so forth. But when you go in the lobby and you look up, you'll see this picture of a cross on a mountain and the Scripture, Matthew 6.33, is below it.

It's not only his personal life verse, but it's a company life verse. It speaks a lot to me. So what about the steps of faith that we're talking about here in the closet? There's a verse in Jeremiah that speaks to me and probably to you as well.

Jeremiah 33.3 says, Call to me and I will answer you and I will tell you great and mighty things which you do not know. Luke 16.10, He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much. And he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

I like to begin my time with the Lord each morning, my quiet time, kind of like Steve and I think probably many of you, in a secluded place, a prayer closet, same place every day except when I'm traveling. And I

was taught early on in my quiet time to use the acronym X. Do all of you use X? We have the little thing we'll hand out here in a few minutes, but it's adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Praise God for His goodness, His patience, love, grace, knowledge, power, holiness, wisdom, greatness, and glory.

Psalm 48.1a says, Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. Adoration, started off with that. Psalm 51.15 says, O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.

Confession, ask God to probe your heart for anything He would have you confess and forsake. You've got to get that off your shoulders and off your conscience before you can really get into a meaningful prayer time. Thanksgiving and everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus.

1 Thess 5.18, so thank God for what He's already done and for what He's going to do for you in the future. Supplication, praying for those specific blessings for specific people. Steve and I have learned that if we've learned anything about prayer, we don't just throw up general prayers.

You've got something that needs to be specifically dealt with when it comes to supplication portion of your prayer time. Lift it up to the Lord. We're all familiar with Philippians 4, 6, and 7. Don't be anxious about anything.

But in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Fellas, one of the tools I use is called the 29-59 plan. Any of you use this? I had heard about it for several years, but didn't know where to get it, didn't know what it was about, and was kind of embarrassed to ask.

But finally, one day, I asked my disciple about it, and he gave me the address, and I ordered the book. And it's a wonderful prayer guide. If you don't already use it, I can recommend it highly.

There's also a companion one called the 9-59 plan. What does 29-59 mean? Well, it means 29 minutes and 59 seconds, or basically 30 minutes of a quiet time. And the author of that book suggests five areas of prayer, praise, thanksgiving, confession, intercession, petition, and then the one most all of us forget every day, listening.

That's called the prayer hand. So where do you find the time? You have to make the time. We believe that you have to make an appointment with God.

Put it in your day timer, your Palm Pilot, whatever vehicle you use. If you looked at either one of mine or Steve's Palm Pilot, you would see it. You may use a Trio.

I'm not sure. But anyway, it's scheduled in there. It's not by accident.

And if we have to move it one way or the other, we've got a meeting at 6, we have to move it back, we'll change it. So it's intentional on our part to do that every day. We have to give top priority to the quiet time.

Matthew 6-33 we've talked about. Luke 18-29, I tell you the truth, Jesus said, no one has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and in the age to come, eternal life. John 12-26, if anyone serves me, let him follow me.

And where I am, there he shall serve my servant also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. And the one out of Galatians that we're familiar with, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but

Christ lives in me.

The life I live and the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. As we grow and read and meditate on God's word, we will continue to grow. Meditation, I think, is probably one of the missing links to a lot of our meaningful quiet times.

We do it through reading and we do it through regurgitating on God's word, reading it over and over, using cross references and different commentaries, really trying to get to the meat of what the subject is all about. Another thing I like to do, and I'm not sure whether Steve does this or not, is mark your Bible. Some people are hesitant to do that, but over the years I've found it to be very helpful.

And what really kind of surprises me is, as I read the next year, the thing that stuck out to me last year oftentimes is not what the Lord really impressed with me this year. So it kind of helps me keep track of what he's impressing upon me. And we, in our prayer time, I think sometimes try to short-circuit it as we kind of think about sending out what may be tantamount to an e-mail or a fax.

We expect to whistle up a quick prayer and then just get immediate results. And sometimes that happens, but more often than not it's a process. We like to encourage people to pray with an expected spirit.

When you go to meet with the God of the universe, expect him to answer your prayer. There is no doubt about the fact that he hears your prayer. We're assured of that, right? If we're believers and we have his indwelling Holy Spirit in us, that he not only hears our prayer, he knows the intent of our heart.

He knows what we're thinking. So that prayer time with him is not casual. I mean, you're having special time with the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

The wheel illustration is an important tool that I'm sure most all of you in this meeting are familiar with. But I think sometimes we stray from that, and when we're trying to get back to the basics, it's one of the tools that helps us focus on where we need to be spending our time. The author of this 2959 book says something that I'd like to share with you.

He says, Either you should pray with feeling or you shouldn't pray at all. Ritual is meaningless unless we are emotionally invested in it. He says, no, those are not all right.

Each of these axioms is over-romantic, ill-thought-out, and not helpful in sustaining a life of prayer. The author's name is Peter Lord, and he goes on to say, relating to anyone long term, this would include your wife, has its ups and its downs. Nobody can be interesting all the time, sustain high energy all the time, or fully invest themselves all the time.

What sustains a relationship long term is ritual, routine, and a regular rhythm that incarnates the commitment. Let me repeat that. What sustains a relationship over time is ritual, routine, a regular rhythm that incarnates the commitment.

That was real helpful to me, guys, when I read that, because, frankly, that's my experience. If you'll just get up, take that first step, and make the time to be with God, He will move you to a higher level once you get into a relationship with Him. And just to point there, it's not a one-size-fits-all.

We've talked a lot about reading the Bible through in a year. I don't read the Bible through in a year. There's lots of good plans for reading the Bible.

I don't read the Bible through in a year. I get the Bible read, but I spend more time studying the Bible. Some people like to read the Bible through in a year.

I have read the Bible through in a year. I get the Bible read through in about two years, the way I read and study. Steve, I might say that even though I really pretty much agree with Peter Lord that creativity and variety are not necessarily always good, I can tell you that I've had some really rich experiences meeting God in different places.

A couple of things come to mind. My wife and I do quiet time together, and we were out at Glen Eyrie and made an early morning trek up to Dawson's Grave and had our quiet time up there at sunrise. Powerful.

And we went to Hawaii last year to celebrate our 25th anniversary, and we had our quiet time out on the balcony overlooking the beach at Honolulu and went on over to Maui. Same thing as we would get up each morning just a little before sunrise and watch sunrise come up over the ocean. I mean, there are some powerful quiet time experiences that you can have either alone or with your spouse or whatever.

And I'm always amazed that a lot of our friends, when we talk about quiet time, some of the guys we disciple, say, Well, you know, I went on vacation, and I just really got off target. I just didn't get my quiet time done. I'm saying, Why? It's rich.

Guys, we're about out of time. We were about five, ten minutes late getting started over here, and I want to have a little bit of time for questions. I hope you'll bear with us.

We're probably going to go a few minutes over. I promise you there's going to be plenty of dinner over there. I want to talk to you about taking time alone with God to a new level, the need for extended times alone with God.

Now, if you're sitting out there and you're saying, Wait a minute, I'm not even having a consistent daily quiet time, and now he's going to start talking about days and three days and 40 days and so on, I understand. You've got to get started, and it takes little baby steps. First of all, seven minutes with God.

But if you have a developed quiet time with God, then I want to encourage you to take it to a new level. Extended times alone with God. Let's see what God did through two men that we all know in the Bible.

Exodus 24, 18. Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain, and Moses was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights. It came about at the end, not at the beginning, not in the middle.

It came about at the end of the 40 days and nights that the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant, the law. He got it after he spent 40 days in fasting and prayer alone with God. A couple of others that just reiterate the same thing there in Deuteronomy.

Following Jesus' baptism by John, Matthew 4, 1-3, then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after, not before, not during, but after he had fasted 40 days and 40 nights, he became hungry, and the tempter came to him. He wasn't prepared to meet Satan one-on-one until he'd spent 40 days with the Father.

He wasn't prepared to go out and begin his ministry until he'd spent 40 days with the Father. God does miraculous things through people that go spend 40 days with him, but also recognize that he called those guys to go spend those 40 days with him. Before Jesus received the new covenant and his world and

eternity changing ministry, he did spend 40 days with the Lord.

In Luke 6, 12-16, before Jesus chose his disciples, it was at this time that he went off to a mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose the 12 of them, the men that would become the apostles and take forth the gospel to the world, the guys that he was going to trust. But before he did it, he spent a night alone with the Father.

Jesus spent the whole night in prayer, and before he fed the 5,000, now when Jesus heard what about John, he withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by himself. Matthew 14, 13. In Mark 6, 30-32, the apostles gathered together with Jesus, and they reported to him all that they had done and taught.

And he said to them, Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while. For there were many people coming and going, and they didn't even have time to eat. Remind you of anybody like us? They went away.

They went away in a boat to a secluded place by themselves. Before Jesus walked on water, rebuked the wind, and had Peter come to him, Mark 6, 46 tells us, after bidding them farewell, he left the mountain to pray. Most scholars believe that Jesus spent all day and night the Wednesday before he was crucified on Friday in prayer in solitude alone with the Father.

We know that he spent the Thursday night in prayer to the Father. Why? What was he getting ready to do? Certainly to suffer the most excruciating pain known to any human, and the death on the cross. But even much more than that, he was about to change man's relationship with God forever.

It takes time alone with God. We're passing out those outlines. You'll thank God that we are not going to go through those outlines.

We'd be here the rest of the night. Guys, that's a good outline for a time alone with God. If you can find a way, set a half day.

We tell guys that are experienced quiet timers, set a half day a month to go spend time alone with God. You know, if you say, where do you get a half day for the golf course? It takes four hours to go play golf, right? Get a half day alone with God once a month. Get a full day alone with God once a quarter.

Set a date with him. Go to a place of complete solitude. No phone, no watch, no radio, no TV, nothing to distract you.

Take with you a Bible, a hymnal, a journal notebook so you can write down what he tells you. Your ten most wanted cards. Did we pass those out already? The ten most wanted cards so you can pray for others and any prayer list that you might have.

Walk with him, talk with him, get out in nature. Walk around, focus on the Lord. Tell him how much you love him and let him tell you how much he loves you.

Thank him in detail for all that he does for you. And then go sit down and read the Word and study it and listen to him. At the end of the day, fellas, for me, does anybody here ever hear the audible Word of God? We hear that referred to? Ever hear God talk to you? You do? How do you do it? I'll tell you an easier way, an even easier way, and that's beautiful.

Is this the living Word of God? When you read it to yourself, do you hear it? When you read it out loud, do you hear it? If it's the living Word of God, isn't He talking to us audibly? Aren't we hearing Him? So at the end of the day, it's all about a conversation with God, isn't it? I talk to God, He talks to me. I talk to God, He talks to me. So guys, you're probably wondering, where is He going to take me? I hope you can tell from the passion that Steve and I have that we are totally sold out to the fact that a quiet time is at the very core of you having the intimate relationship you want with the Almighty.

I think Philippians 3.10 summarizes for me the type of intimacy that I would like to have, and I'd like to share this for you from the amplified version. I don't know whether it's in your... Is it in your scriptures there? For my determined purpose is that I may know Him, that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His person more strongly, more clearly, and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection, which it exerts over believers, and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into His likeness and even to His death in the hope. And then I think it would be good, Steve, if we kind of wrapped up this portion of our time together and go back to the foundational scriptures that we dealt with at the beginning.

If you can turn to those, guys, you might follow me. These scriptures, 2 Peter 1, 3 through 8, just have a lot, a lot of meat on them. His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.

Through these, He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, our contention, guys, is that if we want to know God, which is where we started with the workshop, we've got to be in His Word and be a part of His life.

Questions? The extended period, fasting, fasting... Fasting helps. If you want to get... I mean, do I always fast on extended times with God? No. That's something for you to work out with God, for you to talk to God about.

If He wants you to fast, He'll put it on your heart and fast. I mean, fasting is beautiful and wonderful. Yeah, very effective.

But it doesn't always have to be done. On my check chart, on my accountability chart, I've agreed to pray for a particular ministry one month, one day a month, and I fast one day a month. And I'll occasionally miss that, but that's my goal, to spend a day in fasting.

I don't go to work and I do all that, but I still spend the day in and out of prayer for that ministry. Yes, sir. Could you go over the applications you went through kind of quickly, like memorize Matthew, just to get started? Set an alarm clock to start with.

Get up earlier than you normally get up. Memorize Matthew 6.33, first and foremost. When you get out of bed, thank God.

Thank God for your good night's rest. And try to remember to say Matthew 6.33. Holy Spirit probably will start putting it on your heart anyway. Then pray.

And pray about all the things, but try and remember to pray for God to give you the motivation and the time. Then, I mean, I go to exercise and Scripture memory. I think you need to fit Scripture memory in there somewhere.

Somehow, you don't have to do it in exercise like I do it. But get Scripture memory in there. And then you're going to pray, read, study, memorize, meditate, and apply the Word of God.

We call it the hand illustration. Hear, read, study, memorize, meditate, and apply the Word of God. Somewhere in there you may want to start journaling, doing your Bible reading highlights.

You don't have to do all these things all at once, but they'll help you grow in a pattern. Another thing, Steve, that I've found to be very valuable is before you go to bed at night, tell yourself what time it is you want to wake up. It's a powerful and effective way to wake up at a time you want to wake up.

Don't just go to bed and not have in your mind the fact that I want to wake up at 5 or 5.30. I can't tell you how it works, but if you go to bed saying, Lord, I want to wake up at 5.30 in the morning, I mean, time and time again, I'll wake up and look at the alarm clock and it'll be within a couple of minutes at 5.30. Don't ask me how it works, but it works. But if I go to bed not even thinking about what time I'm going to get up, and the alarm clock goes off, sometimes you're just kind of in a fog, you know, you're just not quite ready to tune in. You might try that.

Something else I'll tell you. Some guys say to me after I tell them that I get up at 4 o'clock in the morning, they say, well, golly, what time do you go to bed? I go to bed about 10.30. I get about 5.5 or 6 hours sleep at night. The world tells me I need 8 hours, and maybe I do, but God works it out with me with about 5.5 or 6 at night.

That may not work for all of you. No. Wait a minute.

It's not about reading through the Bible in the ear, and it's not about getting up at 4 o'clock, but it is about having a daily morning quiet time. And being committed to it. Come rain or shine.

Other questions? And I see my good friend Herman over there, and I know what Herman would say at this point. Interruptions to your quiet time. Herman, by the way, Dr. Reese, for four years was my first spiritual mentor, led me to Jesus Christ, and still is my spiritual mentor, but he's that guy I had to meet with at 6.30 every Wednesday morning that held me accountable for all that stuff and taught me Matthew 6.33 and so on.

And I remember coming to Herman one day, and I said, Herman, I've got a problem. My wife is mad at me. He said, why? And he said, well, she comes in, and I'm sitting there.

I'm talking to God. And my wife comes in and interrupts me. And I kind of, you know, like, Nian, could you go on and do your thing somewhere else? And she gets mad about it.

And he said, hey, fella, I'm going to tell you something right now. God wants to be not first in your life. He wants to be at the center of your relationships with people and your first and number one relationship on planet Earth is your wife.

When your wife comes in the room, you close your Bible and push it aside and give her your full 100% attention. Did I say that right, boss? Yes. Many of the guys I've met with that start doing A Quiet Time give me really positive feedback from their wives.

Their wives begin to see a change in the way they're living. Another quote that Herman has, Steve, that's pretty good along this line, he says, we all have habits. We may as well have a good one or two.

That also goes for the remote control. Yes. When your wife comes in, it's better to turn it off.

Exactly. Good point. Especially the remote control.

Any other questions, fellas? Can I close this in prayer? Yes. Heavenly Father, thank You. Thank You for all that You are.

Thank You for Your desire to want to have time alone, intimate time with us. We just can't thank You enough that You've chosen us, that You want us to walk through that narrow gate, that there's only a select few that do this, and it's not about an exclusive club. We don't understand it.

We just know that You called us, and we want to follow You. Father, I pray for every man in this room that You'll give us all the motivation, that You'll show us the time to spend quality time alone with You so that You can do Your will in our lives and so that You can change this world for Your purpose and for Your glory, not for ours, but for Yours. It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19805.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/harold-armstrong/quiet-time/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net