

Bible Studies

Devotions I



Read 2 Peter 1:3-9

As believers it should be our goal to grow in the faith. To leave behind childish ways and go on to maturity. No longer tossed about by everything we see and hear, by all the things we experience daily, but firmly anchored in Christ *But in your thinking be adults.* 1 Corinthians 14v20 (In understanding be men. KJV)

Do you think attending Church once a week is sufficient to attain this? Why?

Read Psalm 63v1, Jeremiah 29v13, Psalm 46v10, Psalm 37v5

Christianity is a relationship with Jesus. Relationships take time to build, they require communication. If you assume on them too much they crumble, effort must be put into them.



What are devotions?

Sometimes we talk about "*having a quiet time*". Time that we set aside to spend waiting on God. Time that is dedicated to God. Time to listen and learn. Time to communicate.

Devotional times consists of;

- Bible Reading.*
- Meditation.*
- Pray.*
- Waiting on God.*
- Worship.*

Do you think all of the 5 elements of a quiet time have to be done together? Other than the five elements above what else should we do in our quiet time?

Most of us experience frustration regarding our quiet times. We know we should do it. We feel good when we do. But most of us don't.

Maybe we have started a regular devotion, with a daily guide of a Bible reading program and have failed to keep it up. We started by enjoying it, then we petered out, we gave up, we felt guilty, we try again, - *Hello Lord, remember me?* Maybe we have dismissed the whole exercise as fruitless.

Have you considered that the unfulfilled desire to work out a good devotional life might be a sign an unfulfilled desire to know God better? If so the foundation has already been laid on which you can build.

Why do so many Christians struggle with practising a quiet time?

Why do you think we need to have a quiet time?



Rules for devotions

- Devotions should be daily.
- They must be done at the same time every day.
- This time should be first thing in the morning.
- They should last a minimum of 15 minutes.
- You should read the same amount every day.
- The time should be structured so we can get through our prayer list.
- If you don't feel close to God you have failed.
- The more chapters you read the better.
- The longer your quiet time the better.

What do you think, are these good rules for devotions?

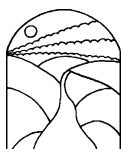
It might be good to remind ourselves that we are not under law but grace. Colossians 2v21-23 reminds us that man made laws, might seem spiritual, but do not bring about what God desires. It seems to me that one reason so many of us fail to have a regular quiet time is because we set unrealistic goals.

S
T
R
E
A
M
S

I
N

T
H
E

D
E
S
E
R
T



Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz

WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

What rules would you suggest for a quiet time?



**Does everyone quiet time have to be the same?
Does it have to be the same throughout your Christian life?**

Which do you think is better?



**Not having a quiet time because we cannot do it regularly (and feeling guilty about it) or having an irregular quiet time?
Enjoying a 5 min quiet time or straggling through 30 min of boredom?
Reading 4 chapters a day or 4 verses?
Keeping to a fixed length, or adjusting the length to suit our free time?
Feeling guilty about not managing a quiet time or working out a way that you can find the time?**

The traditional quiet time is for 15 minutes when you first get up, can you think of any other regimes that might work better for other kinds of people?

What is the advantage of doing your quiet time when you first get up?

What part does habit play in our quiet time?

What part does discipline play?



It was Jesus practice to go out by Himself into the countryside to pray.

Matthew 14v23

Luke 6:12

Mark 1v35

Did you notice that Jesus did not take his quiet time exclusively in the morning? The example recorded Mark 1 seems to have been a very busy time in Jesus ministry. **Why do you think he took time out?**

But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Psalm 1:2-3

You cannot help but feel that King David *enjoyed* his quiet times, they were not a burden to him but a strength. They brought him close to God, which was just where he wanted to be. In them he found prosperity, it is almost as though his quiet time sanctified his secular time.

Do you think this might be the true for you?

First fruits



Deuteronomy 18v4

Romans 11v16

Proverbs 3v9

How do you think we might apply these verse to ourselves

Some of what I have written may suggest that a lax quiet time is perfectly acceptable. This is not my intention. I believe that devotions should be daily. Psalm 140v2,145v5.

The important issue for us is not whether a quiet time keeps the rules but whether it works.

Often our protestations are just excuses for a lack of discipline.

If you want to start practising a quiet time it is often suggested that you start once weekly, make an appointment with God. From there you can build.

The question is not can I afford the time for devotions, but can I afford not too.

Bible Studies

Devotions II

The word devotion has two meanings; It describes the state of being devoted to someone or something, loving them or being loyal to them. The dictionary says it includes devoutness and self-surrender. Secondly it is a religious exercise, it describes something that has been devoted to God, a votive. It is a kind of sacrifice. Both meanings apply to our quiet times, one emphasises our desire to know God, the other our duty to come into His presence.



'Quiet time is more than just a daily appointment with God. It's more like a visit with your closest friend.'

Three Questions

Remember a daily devotion consist of *Bible reading, meditation, prayer, listening to God and worship.*

Why do we need to have a quiet time?



What is the objective of our quiet time?

What will happen if we don't practice a regular quiet time?

Perhaps a better question to ask yourself is *what do I want from my quiet time?*

Answering that question will help you to design a devotional time to meet your needs

What different goals could a quiet time have?.

How you approach your quiet time, will to a large extent dictate how successful it becomes. If you approach it thinking, *this is boring lets get it over with*, bored is what you will probably be, if you approach it thinking, *I wonder what God has for me today*, you will probably hear from Him.

No Expectation  **No Concentration**  **No Application**

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water Hebrews 10v19-22

A devotional time is intended to give us an opportunity to come into God's presence and to wait on Him. The Bible makes a great deal of the presence of God and it's effects on people. Jesus created a way that we could freely come into God's presence. It is almost as if being in the presence we receive a spark of the divine life. Something is imparted into us.

What happened to Moses when he met with the Lord? Exodus 34v29



How is spending time in God's presence going to change us?

What things bring us into God's presence?

What are you going to find in God's presence?

How are these things going to effect your life?

Quietening outer noise and inner noise



The outside noise is all the distractions and the business that surrounds us. Often it is real physical noise. The things outside of ourselves that stop us from concentrating on God.

How are you going to quieten the outside noise?

What do you think the inside noise is?

The inside noise is the things inside us that stop us from concentrating on God. These could be sins, fear, problems,frustrations, stress, lack of faith or doubts. Sometimes it's our frame of mind or our lack of expectations or self discipline. Greatest of all, is our lack of desire.

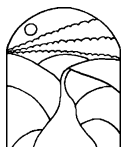
How do you still the inner noise?

S
T
R
E
A
M
S

I
N

T
H
E

D
E
S
E
R
T



Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz

WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

We have already talked about the elements that make up a quiet time.

What are the dangers of a quiet time that is too structured?

What are the dangers of a quiet time that is not structured enough?

What part should listening for God play in our quiet times?

How do you receive guidance in your quiet time?

Confessions of a bored Bible reader



Some of us have the problem that we have read the Bible so many times, we don't expect to get anything from it. (This is a fallacy the Bible is a multi-level book there is always a new way to see a verse). The solution might be to start reading,

*A different version of the Bible,
To read with a different goal,
To use a different system.*

What effect does the word have in our lives?

Joshua 1v8

Psalms 19v7

Jeremiah 15v16

Psalms 119v130

Psalms 119:165

Systems A Chapter of Proverbs a day
Five Psalms a day
The Gospels in a month

Topics A Gospel, noting how Jesus met people's needs.
Philippians, looking for verses on contentment
A Bible Character
Proverbs, noting verses about; money, friendship, wisdom or speech

There is a lot you can do with the Psalms, you can categorise them according to praise, thanksgiving or requests for Help. Or read them noting God's character and attributes, how to worship or following a theme like healing.

Methods

You can use a concordance and follow a theme like circumcision, forgiveness, anger or meekness - a Chain reference Bible is good for this.

You can read a commentary at the same time as you read the book.

For this kind of reading a note book or a Bible you can write in is a good idea.

Setting goals in Bible reading is important.

Vary the way you read so that you can read the whole Bible not just the bits you like.

Some people read; a psalm, a gospel portion, and a chapter from the OT & Epistles a day to get a balanced reading. Keep a note of the verses that strike you.

Complaints



How would you resolve these problems?

I don't get anything from the Bible, It doesn't say anything to me.

I'm rushing through this, I'm distracted or in a hurry.

I'm doing this because Christians are supposed to do this

I don't understand what this passage is saying.

Do you think this approach might help with other areas of your quiet time?

If you get bored with your quiet time what should you do?

How can changing the way we do devotions help?

For some of the material in this study I am indebted to *jump-starting Your Devotional life*, By Jan Johnson and David Mains.

Bible Studies

Meditation



To meditate means to consider, to ponder, think about or chew over. In modern thought meditation generally linked to eastern religion, it includes the idea emptying your mind. This is a spiritually dangerous practice and is foreign to Biblical meditation. In biblical meditation our goal is not to empty our minds but to fill them with the things of God.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly Colossians 3v16

Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. Matthew 4v4

For us meditation simply means thinking about the word of God.

Joshua 1v8

Psalms 1v2-3

Psalms 19v14

Psalms 77v12

Psalms 119v148



Why would a Christian want to meditate on God's word? What will we gain by doing so?

The Goal of meditation is to understand the Scriptures and to apply them to our lives. In doing so we will know God better and mature as believers. Christian Meditation is an active practice, not a state of inaction (like Yoga). We actively think about something. But we must be careful to avoid distractions and we must also be careful that we are not so busy thinking it through, that we miss the Holy Spirit's guidance and wisdom.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. John 16:13

Start with prayer, ask that the Lord to Guide and Help you as you think.



We can meditate on

*The Bible, a single verse,
or a passage or story.*

God

What He is like

What He has done

Where and when?

Isaac meditated in the field, Gen 24v63, David, on his bed, Psalm 63v6. Meditation can be focused, sitting at a table with, Bible, concordance and note pad. Or it can be casual. If you can memorise a verse, or write it on a card, then you can meditate as you go about your day.



First step

As you read the Bible, identify the key verses.

Look out for promises you can claim and conditions you must keep.

Statements about God.

Good and bad attitudes and their results,

Sins that you need to confess and avoid.

Tools for right living and examples to follow.

Commands to obey and principles to apply .

Verses to memorize and truths to believe.

Prayers that we can use in our devotions.

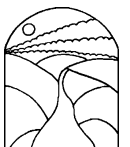
Look especially for any areas where the Bible and your life do not agree.
The Holy Spirit will guide you, He will make verses stand out.

S
T
R
E
A
M
S

I
N

T
H
E

D
E
S
E
R
T



Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz

WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz



Who, when, why, and what.

There is a much used and time honoured method of understand a verse. It is very simple, you just ask the verse questions.

Lets take an example

Luke 11:28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

The first thing you need to do is read the passage several time. Read it in different versions. Read the surrounding verses to get the context. Then ask God to help you understand the passage.

Who is Jesus talking to?

What was the context?

What is this passage about?

How did the first hearers of these words understand them?

Why are we blessed?

Why does Jesus say rather?

What is the difference between hearing and obeying?

Why does Jesus use the word *obey* not *do*?

What other verses are similar to this one?

Now look through the list given under first steps.

Which elements of this list are found in this passage?

From here we go on an ask;

How does this verse apply to me?

What do I need to learn from it?

What do I need to change because of it?

What questions would you ask these verses?



2 Timothy 3v16-17

Psalm 11v3,

What other ways could this verse have been put, why wasn't it?

Often it helps to paraphrase a verse for yourself, to put it in modern idiom, your own words.

If the passage is narrative, ask;

What the meaning of the story is?

Why is it recorded for us?

How does it relate to me.

Why did the characters act the way they did?

Which actions were right or wrong?

Why did they act this way?

Can you identify similar circumstances in your life?

What can you learn from this passage?

For example read Luke 17v12-19



What verse strike you?

What questions will you ask?

Have you ever been guilty of the sins in this passage?

What is the application, how will you change?

The most important thing in this is, **Always keep looking for the application.** How the verse impinges on your life. Then put it into effect, knowing the word is no good if you don't do it. Use what you have learned.

Share what you have discovered with someone else.

Turn your meditation into prayer.



Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. John 13:17

Bible Studies

Devotional Prayer

Prayer styles of the Rather Famous

- Who risked his life rather than give up his daily time of prayer?
- Who got up early in the morning and went to the mountains to pray?
- Who offered prayers of praise, thanks, and requests underwater?
- Who 'wrestled in prayer' for the Colossians?
- Who prayed so fervently that the priest thought she was drunk?
- Who spent the night in prayer to God?
- Who saw the angel Gabriel in the midst of his prayers?
- Who interrupted his private prayers to ask his friends a question?
- Who prayed after talking to the ruler of the land?
- Who prayed while talking to the ruler of the land?

Daniel 6:10, Mark 1:35, Jonah 2:1-9, Colossians 4:12, 1 Samuel 1:12-14, Luke 6:12, Daniel 9:21, Luke 9:18, Exodus 8:30, 10:18, Nehemiah 2:4

Types of prayer

<i>Acts 12v5,12</i>	<i>1 Corinthians 14v15</i>	<i>Colossians 4v12</i>
<i>1 Thessalonians 3v10</i>	<i>1 Thessalonians 5v17</i>	<i>1 Thessalonians 1v2</i>
<i>Ephesians 1v16</i>	<i>Ephesians 6v18</i>	<i>James 5v13</i>
<i>James 5v14</i>	<i>Matthew 6v6</i>	

Reading through references to prayer in the New Testament, it is impossible to miss the conclusion that the early Church considered prayer a priority. Paul frequently tells his readers that he is praying for them and ask them to pray for him in return.

Devoted to prayer - 1 Corinthians 7v5

Faithful in prayer - Romans 12v12

Throughout the day we should pray for the situations we face and for our fellow believers. **But what form should prayer take in our devotional times?**

I would say that devotional prayer tends to be personal. It is a time to bring to God the things that are close to our hearts. Our family, our walk with God and our own needs. Prayer should never be need orientated it should be God orientated.

Here is an outline.

Praise & Worship Psalm 33

Prayer should always start by concentrating on God, fixing our eyes firmly on Him. See Him for who He is and not just what He does and will do

Confession Psalm 51

We need to confess any unforgiven sin and ask for God's forgiveness. Not only is it necessary to keep short accounts on our sin, sin will hinder our prayers.

Requests Psalm 86

Scripture says we do not have because we do not ask. James 4v6. We should let our requests be made known Philippians 4v6. Scripture encourages us to be persistent in prayer, Luke 18v1. If there is something specific you need or are seeking pray for it every day.

Thanksgiving Psalm 116

Prayer should be given with thanksgiving, both for what God has already done and what He will do.

Pray in the spirit Ephesians 6:18

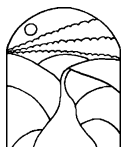
A close investigation of 1 Corinthians 14 shows that Paul use of tongues was primarily in his own devotions. This is a great way to build ourselves up. Jude v20. And is very useful when we do not know how to pray.

S
T
R
E
A
M
S

I
N

T
H
E

D
E
S
E
R
T



Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz

WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

All this is necessary for a balanced prayer life.

What will happen if you neglect each of these areas?

Pray for your needs but also let your prayers be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6

Paul's prayer for his Churches

Ephesians 3v16-19.

Philippians 1v9-11.

Colossians 1v10-11.

2 Thessalonians 1v11-12.

Philemon 1v6.

3 John 1v2.

The best example of how to pray in our devotions is of course the Lord's Prayer.

Lets put together a list of the things we need to pray for on a regular basis. Who we are going to pray for and the kind of things we are going to pray.

Who	What

Bible Studies

Waiting on God

Waiting on God is an important part of our devotional life. Our quiet time should be a dialogue, not a monologue. It should be interactive. We are in the driving seat, if we do not allow God to speak to us, we are sure to miss His voice.



Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret Psalms 37:7
Be still, and know that I am God Psalms 46:10

It is when we are still that we can hear from God. The busyness of our lives tends to block out His voice.

Waiting on God is not necessarily a separate part of our quiet time, it is an attitude in which we do our quiet time.

Waiting on God

As you read these verse note the promises they contain for those who wait on the Lord.

Psalm 5v3

Isaiah 8v17

Psalm 37v34

Psalm 27v14

Psalm 40v1

Psalm 38v15

Proverbs 20v22

Psalm 106v12

Psalm 130v5-6

Isaiah 12v6

Isaiah 40v4

Lamentations 3v26



What do you think it means to wait for the Lord?

It can mean waiting for the Lord to do something. (eg fulfil a promise).

Why might we have to wait for God to do something?



In the context of this study it means waiting on God.

What is the difference between waiting for God and waiting on God?

In a Biblical context waiting on God can mean;

Meditating

Being patient

Listening

Being silent in His presence

Hoping / Trusting

Being dependent on Him

Looking for expectantly

Resting

Anticipating

Being submissive to His will

In English waiting can also mean serving.

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope (Wait KJV) in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:30



What kind of strength does this imply?

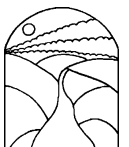
What kind of a promise does this give for our day?

S
T
R
E
A
M
S

I
N

T
H
E

D
E
S
E
R
T



Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz

WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

The most frequently used Hebrew word is Kevah; *to hope strongly, to trust, implying firmness and constancy of mind, to hope for to wait for to expect, to hope that a thing will be effected and to wait steadily and patiently till it is effected.* Wilson's Thus waiting on God means waiting for Him to speak or waiting for Him to act. It is sometimes translated hope.

is waiting on the lord the same as prayer?

Waiting on the Lord means being open and receptive to His voice. It requires an expectancy. The Quakers call waiting on the Lord their, liturgy of silence

1

Waiting on God as we read the Bible, means letting the Holy Spirit draw our attention to a verse that may have a special meaning for us. Letting him give you some new understanding, revelation or application.

2

Waiting on God as we meditate, means allowing Him to guide our thoughts. To *guide you into all truth.* John 16:13. To bring to your memory things you may have forgotten.

3

Waiting on God in Pray, means receiving His wisdom on what to pray for and how to pray, (p/o Praying in the Spirit.) Often as we do this the Holy Spirit will give us insight into the situation we are praying for. (A Word of Wisdom of Knowledge.)

4

Waiting on God in Worship, means worshiping Him in Spirit and in Truth, not just in songs and words. God often speaks during worship, *Psalm 95.* Consequently our worship should not be so pressured that we fail to listen for His voice.

In the words of the Land Transport Authority; **SPEED KILLS** You can't wait on the Lord if you are hurrying.

Waiting on God implies that our desire is fixed on Him.

Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts. Isaiah 26:8

What do we mean by actively waiting?

Speak Lord your servant listens

These were the words of Samuel when he first heard the voice of the Lord. 1 Samuel 3. There is so much that the Lord has to tell us, we need to get used to listening for His voice. To adopt Samuel's attitude, "*here I am Lord what do you want to say to me?*"

What sort of things might God want to say to us?

Why does the Lord require us to wait on Him?

You may have heard the phrased "It witnessed" what does this mean?

Romans 2v15, 9v1

A Special Time

Waiting on God is part of our quiet time, but there may be periods in our lives when we feel the need to take time out and listen to what God has to say. This could be because we face a specific need, or it could be because we sense a dissatisfaction or hollowness that means God has something He wants to tell us.

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Acts 13:2

Again we must stress waiting on God does not mean *blanking out your mind*, this can be very dangerous. Notice those in Antioch were worshipping when the Spirit spoke. Likewise, when the disciples were waiting for the infilling of the Holy Spirit they were active in prayer, *Acts 1v14.*

It is quite possible that at such times you may start to evidence one of the Gifts of the Spirit.