

Communion with God – Developing and maintaining a regular, fresh connection with our Source

Introduction

I chose this talk because God impressed upon me how this is such an area of struggle for so many in the church, no matter how mature.

If we get this right the sky is the limit for our Christianity. We will have motivations we never had before. We will have strength we have not previously experienced, we will do exploits we have not previously done, we will win more souls and we will move powerfully.

Spending time with God is not easy other wise none of us would struggle, but it is well worth persevering as the alternative is backsliding. We backslide not because we stop going to church but because we stop going to the closet.

Key mindsets to have

God is our source – nothing else but him. We may have many resources but only one source

God is the greatest satisfier of all time. He created us to be satisfied by him alone

Scripture calls us to dwell in his presence

Why - Scriptural basis for a quiet time.

Ps 91:1: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty

Ps 84 – various: How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!

2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

10 Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked nor stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.

3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

5 My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you

Types of quiet times

Quiet times characterised by death

The obligation quiet time – this is where a quiet time has become a duty or a daily chore. We faithfully spend time with God but it makes little difference to our lives. These times are usually rushed as we would rush any other chore to get onto the next one

The guilt quiet time – this is where we are aware that we are not spending as much time with God as we would like to so we are trying to catch up. Generally we don't open up before God because we know we don't want to commit to a deeper more committed walk

The routine religious quiet time – this is where we pray to God without even thinking what we are doing – it is a routine we have got into and go through motions and get it over with. It makes very little impact on our lives but we can have a sense of doing the right thing

Quiet times characterised by Life

The joyful refreshing intimate quiet time:

Characteristics:

You long for it

You glow during and after it

It ends in intensity but carries on for the rest of the day

You are challenged and grow as a result

You receive new fresh direction

You receive a renewed desire to serve God

Key obstacles

Lack of desire (Rev 2:4 – Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen. Repent and do the things you did at first)

Lack of priority

Lack of personal holiness / purity

Lack of discipline

Key aspects of a good quiet time:

Location, location, location – A QUIET TIME (I remember a recent sermon where Julio said “Find a place that is quiet” (give personal story). Jesus retreated to a quiet place to get away from the demands on his life

Environment –

Physical

not at your computer with the email on

- turn your mobile phone off

- let others you live with know you don't want to be interrupted

- leave the house if necessary / possible (extended times)

- We need to be pro active in protecting this time

Mental

We may manage to get the physical environment right but what about the mental environment. You may be feeling behind in your life and are thinking about what

to do. There are a few ways of dealing with this. One way is to bring the issue before the Lord and ask for his help by committing it to prayer. Some people have a piece of paper where they note distracting thoughts

Your emotional state

Maybe you are feeling depressed or anxious. Consider "Put on the garments of praise instead of a spirit of despair. It may help to put on loud praise music (or a walkman / Ipod) and become aggressive against the depression"

Anticipation – we need to expect God to meet with us. This is where a journal is key. If you have a pen and paper ready I find I can hear God. When I don't it is much harder to hear God and very difficult to remember what he said last month.

If you can get the above right the rest is easy.

Reading plan – there are formal reading plans. Some of us just read through the books in some kind of rotation. Others like the word for today. Whatever keeps you into and excited about the word is what you should stick with.

How much time?

This should not be a factor – There are no points for spending huge amounts of time with the Lord however as we are deeping our relationship with God we will want to spend more and more time with him. Liken it to a close friend or someone you enjoy being with. You spend as much time as you can find.

Quality time is the key

Structure

The Word I have found is the best way to focus and stay on track. The Word focuses us on Jesus and off ourselves. I generally find it more productive to read the word and then seek God and pray.

Have a plan but be spontaneous and creative. If you play the guitar you could incorporate this in your quiet time. Also be open to dancing before the Lord (David danced)
Some people find the Word for Today of great help but this is not for everyone. They are good to get you into a routine as there is an accountability in terms of dates etc

Practicalities

When? There is no right of wrong time as we all are made differently but the following principles are key:

Find your best time of the day. Give the Lord your first fruits

The morning is great because it is before you go into battle, however there is nothing wrong with the evenings if you can avoid the temptation of television and evenings are difficult for families and also people are usually tired in the evenings

You can spend time when commuting if this works for you, but you may need to block out distracting noises.

I would suggest on weekends and holidays you try to have extra special times with the Lord as we have more time on the weekend and are generally more relaxed. Also when on

holiday we are often removed from familiar surroundings which can be very helpful in this regard

Remember:

God delights in you
He longs to spend time with you
He wants to help you
He wants to bless you

Creative ideas if you are battling in your quiet times (from Pam Farrel – pastors wife San Diego)

Write a letter to God putting down your desires and ask a friend to mail it to you in 3 months
Read a different translation
Personalise a promise (expand – I praise you Lord that you have given (name) a hope and a future, plans to prosper (name) and not to harm (name)
Go on a praise walk
Read scripture about creation in while in the setting in nature
Praise Jesus from A-Z (I praise you Jesus because you are amazing, I praise you Jesus because you are beautiful etc)

Hopefully at least one of these ideas will help each of us be more creative

Possible structure for those special times.

Reading Scripture
Thanksgiving
Confession
Adoration
Singing unto the Lord in praise and worship (about future victories)
Meditate – focussing on God and His word
Listening and journaling
Searching scripture around a particular theme
Magnification – Just praising God for who he is