

Abide – Solitude w/ God

1/17/21

Mark 1:35

Sunday AM

In 1924, the Washington Senators played in the World Series against the NY Giants. In game 7, the Senators were down a run in the bottom of the 9th when Leon (Goose) Goslin stepped up to the plate w/ two outs. W/ the season on the line, Goslin drove a 2-2 pitch deep off the wall. Seeing the OF had misplayed the bounce, Goslin rounded 1st for 2nd then 2nd for 3rd. On seeing his coach motioning him home, Goslin sprinted to the plate. As he slid into home, the relay throw arrived for a bang, bang play. The homeplate ump delayed his call to consult w/ the other ump's – and Goslin was called out. The place went crazy. The Senator's coach stormed the field, the crowd booed, then the ump declared, "The batter's out... not b/c he didn't beat the throw at the plate, but b/c he missed 1st base!

Lesson – in life, it's critical you touch all your bases and major on the majors. You get first things first.

First base in the Christian life is having a daily time of intimacy and solitude w/ God. There is NOTHING more important than communing w/ the Creator and taking personal care for your soul.

Unfortunately, far too many people either never engage or nominally pursue intimacy w/ God. And sadly, it shows in the condition of our nation, in our families, and in our lives.

In case you were not w/ us last week, we started a series on what it means to **Abide in Christ**. That is, what it means to walk intimately w/ the Lord.

Today, I want to spend a few min. discussing the value and purpose of a daily time of solitude w/ God. Some people call it a QT or a devotional life w/ God.

I The **PRIORITY** of Solitude w/ God

Truth – we make time for the things important to us. In fact, few decisions are really a matter of time; they are a matter of values. Time w/ God is more than a commendable practice, it's critical to living intimately w/ God. I doubt anyone can live victorious in Christ unless they maintain a daily solitude w/ God.

The secret of all growing, dynamic Christians is they consistently spend time alone w/ God. *St. Clair*

Be still and know that I am God... Psalm 46:10a

A QT refers to our daily time w/ God, when we shut out as much outside interference as possible to enter into intimacy/transparency w/ our Creator. It's a time to get alone w/ God to make Him central to our lives. It's a daily time of intentional contemplation of the Divine. ***It's when we quiet our lives long enough to practice the presence of God.*** It's a time to focus on His purposes and surrender of our will for His will.

In this time, we might sing, pray, read a devotional, meditate on Scripture, or just be still to know that He is God. Ultimately though, there's just (1) objective – **to commune w/ and hear from God.**

Lest we forget – in its basic form, ***the Christian life is knowing God, hearing His voice and obeying His leading.*** It's engaging God so that *He might fill us w/ the knowledge of His will thru all the wisdom and understanding that the H.S. gives, so that we may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.*

When it comes to spending time alone w/ God, we take our lead from Jesus who often retreated from the rigors of life to commune/hear from the Father.

Rising early in the AM, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place to pray.

This verse highlights the idea of **silence/solitude**. Silence is learning how to stop talking long enough to hear God while solitude focuses on w/drawing to a private place to meet w/ Him. Both are about **abiding!**

What does this mean? A QT isn't a verse a day to keep the devil away or a Bible marathon to read thru the Bible in a year. It's not maneuvering thru a prayer gauntlet trying to remember every missionary or Aunt Bessie's hangnail. *A QT is a daily time of intimate contemplation on God where you center your life on Him and listen for His voice/leading for your life.*

Some days it involves 5 min. while others it might require 5 hours – it's not about the time, it's about having an encounter w/ the Creator.

II The **PURPOSE** of Solitude w/ God

The primary purpose of a QT isn't for gathering principles or gleanings spiritual produce, but to cultivate relationship w/ a Person, to have a heart occupied w/ Christ. It's to cultivate a spiritual romance w/ God...

Herb Hodges

When I think about the purpose of time alone w/ God, I'm mindful of the moment God met w/ Moses on the backside of nowhere thru a burning bush to reveal Himself to Moses as the great I Am.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. He led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So, he looked, and behold, the bush was burning w/ fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." God said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your off your sandals, for the place where you stand is holy ground." God said, "I am the God of your father – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. Exodus 3:1-6

A A Time to **DISCOVER** God

This is the first and most important purpose – to see God for who He is. It's in the quiet moments of aloneness w/ god that we discover His person/nature. When we crawl into Abba father's lap to commune w/ Him and to experience His love/desire for us.

Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Isaiah 55:6

B A Time to Get **DIRECTION** from God

Thru-out the Bible we see the guiding hand of the Lord on His people. While I share this passage often, there's no clearer picture than in **Proverbs 3:5-6**.

Trust in the Lord w/ all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your steps.

Simply put, when we trust God instead of ourselves by putting Him first in every way – He'll guide our lives.

Daily time w/ God is about **GUIDANCE** – (G) God, (U) and (I) – **DANCE**. When we dance w/ God – He leads and we follow – He guides our lives.

When we pause to seek the Lord first, we'll quickly discover that God orders our steps and our stops.

C A Time to **DELIGHT** in God

To delight is taking action to enjoy and find your happiness in God. It's taking pleasure in who He is and, in His blessings/provisions in your life instead of trying to find it in the things the world. To delight is to worship Him in Spirit/truth and surrender to His care.

*Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Take **delight** in the Lord, and He will give you the desire of your heart. Commit your way to Him; trust in Him, and He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Psalm 37:3*

D A Time to **DEVELOP** God's Heart

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness thru our knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence. Through these he has given us his precious and wonderful promises, so that thru them you may participate in His divine nature... 2 Peter 1:3-4

Just like it is w/ any relationship – in spending time w/ God we begin to become like God. We begin to think, look, and act like Him. We value what He values.

III The **PRACTICE** of Solitude w/ God

How do we do this? Let me offer a few suggestions to help you to get started.

A Begin w/ a **SEEKING** Heart

A believer's first responsibility w/ each new day is to bring his soul into happy relationship w/ God. *Muller*

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7:7-8

A QT is about desiring God's heart for your life. Why did He put you on this earth? Why is He allowing these circumstances? What does he want to do in and thru you? **We must seek Him to discover His answers.**

B Follow a **SIMPLE** Plan

Often, when I speak w/ people about a QT, I discover that they've made it way to complex b/c they don't understand the purpose of their time w/ God.

Keep it simple – remember anticipation/desire is to *turn your life aside* to hear from and to meet w/ God.

Here are a few things I encourage to get started:

Follow a plan/pathway that puts you in the Word but not a time schedule. Make sure the plan focuses on seeking/hearing from God and not just checking a box.

Honestly, I'm not a big fan of read the Bible in a year or even following along w/some person's devotional thoughts (although some are very good). God wants to speak directly into your life, not always thru some spiritual surrogate.

Second, I encourage you start in the Gospels learning to follow Jesus – since this is the heart of Christianity.

This is why I developed the GROW strategy for a person's daily walk and the Come/See Journals. Each day you are reading a bite-sized morsel of Scripture and then processing the passage for logos/rhema – for content of the truth and for God's intent for your life.

Everyone needs:

- A Bible they can understand
- A devotional pathway to provoke spiritual thinking
- Journal/Pen to write what you hear

C Select a **SPECIFIC** Time

Make a commitment to God and protect that time at all cost. **Remember, what counts cost!** You'll need to guard this time from yourself, from distractions, from the tyranny of the urgent – from everyone/thing.

Samuel Brengle, the successor to William Booth as the Commanding General of the Salvation Army, said, "I have only one temptation in ministry – it's the temptation to want to do something for God each day, before I've first spent time w/ Him."

The best way to protect your time w/ the Lord is to prioritize it and set it apart. For some, PM works better than AM. The key is that it occurs daily.

D Choose a **SPECIAL** Place

A special place is anywhere you can have silence and seclusion to meet uninterrupted w/ God. I'd also say that while it should be comfortable, you need to be sitting up versus laying down and the area should be well lit to help you remain alert and engaged.

When you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut the door, pray to the Father in secret; and the Father who sees in secret shall reward you openly.

So, there you have it – the basic elements needed to making time w/ God the first priority of your life.

Speaking of time, let me close by putting our time w/ the Lord into perspective.

According to 2020 Microtrends, the avg. life span in the U.S. is now 79 yrs.

- 28,835 days | 292,040 hours | 41,522,400 min

The question is – **How do we spend our time?**

Working – based on a 50 yr career

8.8 hrs/day | 44 hrs/week | 95 days/yr | 13 yr/life

Sleeping

8 hrs/day | 56 hrs/week | 121.3 days/yr | 26.25 yr/life

Phone – Talking, Texting, Emails, SM, Surfing

5.4 hr/day | 37.8 hrs/week | 82 day/yr | 17.75 yr/life

Avg Time Christians Seek God

8 min/day | < 1 hr/week | 2 days/yr | < 4 mo/life

I started this message by saying there's NOTHING more important than communing w/ the Creator and taking personal care for your soul. We do this by spending time each day w/ the Lord. This is our first base. W/out it, we can't be victorious in life.