

## What is having a personal devotion?

*“The root of 'devotion' is to devote to some holy use. Then that devotion in its true meaning has to do with religious worship. Devotion is one form of thinking where somebody is wholly devoted to God. It is the spirit of reverence, the amazement, the terror of God. It is the state of heart which appears before God through prayer and worship. It is foreign to all lightness of spirit, and is opposite of lightheartedness, crudeness, and bragging. Devotion before God dwells in the realm of quietness and calmness. It is being serious, pensative, and sedate.”* **Bounds – Essentials of Prayer**

The word “devotion” means being dedicated to the use of God. A devotional time is that manifestation of your devotion to God; it is time set apart from your day (which you make holy) in order to dedicate yourself to God, in which you open your Bible to read and study it, and in which you pray and converse with God. That which God speaks to you, then you pray to God over these things, and also other matters of life that weigh in your mind at the time. It should be a daily time, and it should be a time that lifts you and encourages you spiritually. **Normally it is better before you start the day, and it is also good to spend some time with God before you sleep at night.** A devotional time is in one sense formal, yet personal and intensive in which you worship God every day. It fulfills your obligation as a creature of God to return thanks to God for all that God has given you and done for you, including for our very existence as a creature. It is a consequence of being saved and a show of reverence and respect to God. It is the result of a profound fear of God. **Prov 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. Eccl 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.**

The devotional life of a person reflects how he actually lives his life. But the person does not make himself spiritual by WHAT he does outwardly, rather by that intimate relationship with God inwardly. It is the well knowing of God that changes us spiritually

to be a different person, and this **spirituality flows from our relationship of love with God**, and is seen in our daily life. Without time dedicated to this, there is not a good relationship, and it is impossible to be spiritual, or to grow spiritually. Time invested in growing closer to God is never time wasted.

## What are the elements of Devotions?

**Elements:** Begin with prayer, then Bible reading, study, meditation, praises, thanksgiving, requests, and observations. Even though the order is not really that important, it is important to have some of those elements every day. But it does not have to be complicated.

First and foremost, we should understand that **a devotional time with God is like the communication between two young lovers. It is what defines their relationship between them. It is always in two directions, one listens while the other talks, and vice versa.**

It is nothing but frustration when one talks and the other is not listening. So the two elements most important are prayer and the study of God's Word. Moreover, the reading of the Bible is where we meditate and reflect on what God has said and how it should affect us. Meditation is not emptying the mind of thoughts, but rather truly understanding, so read, study, and even write out what you have learned, and how it should change your personal life. **A devotional time is a personal workshop in which you dedicate time and energy so that God can change your life where you have personal problems and needs.** It is not just a time of study, but a time of applying spiritual principles you have discovered in your study, one by one, so that you become more like Christ, little by little every day. It is better to write down your discoveries and doubts (to think through them later), so that you can meditate on them throughout the day, and again read the Word tomorrow to further work on them. **Always review what you have written down before.** There is a great need to not just record information, but to extract spiritual principles of how to live life in such a way to please God, and most of all, what

applies to your personal life (not seeing everything in light of what others should apply to their lives). Devotions are a personal thing, for you. Maybe really deep Bible study should be done apart from devotions where you gather great masses of data and biblical information, but **personal devotions should be dedicated to you daily changing your life** based on extracting spiritual principles, and seeing where they fit into your life.

But it is also important that you give your devotional time **sufficient time to make it effective**, and this is especially important that it is not when you are distracted by other things or tired. You need to concentrate on Scripture so that you are letting it literally change your life.

This means that Bible study is not left in a school or a notebook, but **it is more thinking through what you are reading in the Bible, and analyzing life to see how each principle of Scripture can change how you live your life.** You should seriously take all that God commands you to do and not do, where God instructs you how you ought to do things., “why” motives that should be behind what you are doing or not doing, and “what you do/not do” attitude you should have in your life. Above all studying carefully Scriptures (**Acts 17:11**) so that one can know WHAT IS THE WILL OF GOD, and can direct his life into that will.

**Ps 119:104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. 105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.**

We can **define prayer** as the understanding and aligning of oneself to this perfect will of God. It is not just asking God for something, even though petitions are a very elemental part of prayer. **But prayer is also the wise knowing of what to ask.** The key point is that we know what we should ask God, and this revolves around understanding well the commandments of God, how they function, and what the will of God is. Prayer is the seeking of God's will, and then the asking of God for help and strength to fulfill that Will of God. Besides reading, meditation, reflection, and prayer, a devotional time can also have a time of singing hymns and spiritual

songs that encourage the soul in a spiritual way. These things spiritually lift up the downtrodden soul by focusing on what encourages us spiritually.

### Why have personal devotions?

**1John 5:11-12** says that eternal life is in Jesus. Every Christian should dedicate time daily to understand this salvation that we have in Christ, and to develop it more, that we grow into that spiritually, and this should be done daily.

**A Personal Hygiene Time.** It is a personal time in which we can reflect on our spiritual lives and the sins and shortcomings we have. Consider that all day we learn evil things, for example, by seeing and hearing evil. If we watch television or hear worldly music while at a store, we have this filth in our minds trying to stick to our souls. Hour after hour of this, and a devotional time is something useful to fight against it, considering God's position, and focusing our life away from that and into God's will. It is a time and effort that we dedicate so that we will be stronger spiritually, build up our conviction, and fortify our Christian life. So it is very necessary that we seek spiritual victory, or we will find ruin comes upon us in its place.

### Helps to Structure it

**Seek a Good Time** – The simplest thing here is that you just find a good time. Satan always wants to destroy and prevent you from doing this. Seek a time in the early morning hours (sacrifice your fun time late at night). Morning is better because you have your mind clear. If you cannot have it in the morning, then have it during the day. Simply put, every person knows how much time they need to sleep in order to function well, so go to bed early so that you can dedicate a half hour in the early morning. Moreover apart from making time, it needs to be time when there are no distractions or interruptions that for many make the morning an excellent time (or late night when everybody else has gone to bed).

**Use a notebook.** You should use a notebook to write down what you learn from your readings and

studies of Scripture. In this notebook, note your petitions as well as praises and answers making a history of what God is doing in your life. Don't try to read too much, because flying through books of the Bible in reading and not learning anything is no good. When God speaks to you about something in a verse, write it down. Writing out key verses is an excellent practice that concretes the verse in your mind, and memorizing it is even better. **Always fight for understanding and application in your personal life, because this makes the Word of God work in your life.** Don't allow your mind to wander to other things. Take notes in church and write down what is said (the important things) and questions and doubts you might have. Ask those who teach and preach when you have doubts. Use healthy questioning to direct you into further study and understanding.

**Dedicate a time to pray to God.** Personal devotions are also about speaking with God. Ask God about how you are doing things in your life and ask Him to show you what is wrong, what you are doing incorrectly or not at all but should be doing. (**Mat 14:23**) The Bible condemns long public prayers (**Mat 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47**) and vain repetition (**Mat 6:7**). But on the other hand, the Bible exalts the example of long times in private prayer (**Luke 6:12** "he continued at night in prayer to God" **1The 5:17** "Pray without ceasing"). **Eccl 5:2** exhorts us to take seriously what we say before God, "Be not rash with thy mouth, and **let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God:** for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore **let thy words be few.**" So we should be careful in our words before God. He **IS** listening.

**Matt 6:6** But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. God tells us to pray in secret, and have communion with Him. If we dedicate time and effort to this, God will reward us in our lives.

## How to have a Personal Devotion Time with God

### Suggestions and Observations

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**Isa 58:2** Yet **they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways,** as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; **they take delight in approaching to God**

"The spirit of devotion is nothing more than the aroma of religion, without the root and stalk of where religion breaks forth... It is sugar that sweetens our duties, it is the denying of self, and it is our sacrifices" - E.M. Bounds