



Is Devotional Time Important for Christians?

Should a Christian set aside time to spend in personal devotions? Is it really that important? The answer is, of course, yes. At its essence personal devotions is simply the time a disciple spends with God. In the act of “doing” or “having” devotions, the disciple comes into God’s presence to deepen and strengthen his or her relationship with God through reading the Bible and meditating on what it says, perhaps reading other spiritual literature, and spending time in prayer. As the Psalms express so vividly, our spirits “pant” for God as a deer pants for streams of water ([Psalm 42:1](#)). Jesus himself gives the example. Over and over again throughout the gospels, Jesus goes off to a quiet place to be alone with God. Personal devotions help us grow in spiritual maturity.

God invites us to be in relationship with him

God promises that if we seek him with all our heart and soul, we will find him ([Deuteronomy 4:29](#)). And Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” ([Matthew 11:28](#) NIV). It’s an invitation to rest in God’s presence where there is peace for the worn-out soul. Jesus also invites us to be his disciples: servants, followers, learners, who get to know him intimately and take direct part in what he is doing. “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me” ([John 12:26](#)). To do this, Jesus tells us that we must abide in his word and in him. That way we bear fruit for his kingdom, because “Apart from me you can do nothing” ([John 15:5](#)). To abide means to stay or live in a place, so this is no momentary meeting. We’re invited to dwell with God: “Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty” ([Psalm 91:1](#)). The purpose of a personal devotional time is to get alone with God, in the secret place, and dwell with him in conversation.

Reading the Bible

An important part of personal devotions must be spending time in God’s word, reading the Bible. As we have seen, abiding in God’s word is key to being a fruitful disciple. God wants us to know him, to know what he’s about, and to know what he’s doing. The Bible contains his revealed will, and as the Apostle Paul affirms, is useful to equip the disciple for almost every conceivable situation ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)). [Much of what disciples of Christ contend with today emanate from Satan’s question from the dawn of humanity, “Did God really say?” To know what God “really said” one must first know what he said. We hide his word in our hearts \(even memorize some of it\) to avoid giving the wrong answer to that persisting question \(Psalm 119:11\). Quietening oneself and setting aside distractions are important to set the tone for this special devotional time. In addition to reading the Bible, you may want to use a daily devotional or a Bible reading plan to aid in the process. Spending time in God’s word regularly will help you know him more intimately.](#)

Spending time in prayer

In addition to Bible reading, God wants to meet with his disciples in quiet, even secret places ([Matthew 6:6](#)), and invites us to come to him boldly in prayer ([Hebrews 4:16](#)). This is to be a place of security and peace. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” ([Philippians 4:6-7](#)). We can ask in prayer any questions we may have in reflection from reading the Bible. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he taught them to address God as their Heavenly Father, a title both deeply reverent and beautifully intimate. Jesus reinforces this idea when he reminds us that our Father knows what we need and will give it to us. “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,” Jesus said, revealing the fundamental purpose of personal devotions, “and all these things will be given to you” ([Matthew 6:25-33](#)).

Personal devotions are a spiritual workout

The disciple meets with God in personal devotions to grow in spiritual maturity. If you treat your physical body well—by eating right, exercising, and refraining from bad habits, like smoking—your body will generally be more healthy and fit. Your body will endure exertion longer and resist illness more successfully. The same is true with your spirit when you spend time regularly with God in his

word and in prayer. In fact, Paul likens personal devotions to preparing to compete for a prize, and the personal discipline it requires to persevere ([1 Corinthians 9](#)). He also likens it to preparing for battle (Ephesians 6), so that the disciple can be strong in the Lord for a primarily spiritual conflict.

Just as athletic or artistic skills atrophy when neglected, one's spiritual fitness will decline as well when a disciple is not spending time in God's word and prayer on a frequent, periodic basis. The consequences are dire: first, we forget what we know, and then we forget how to listen to God. This obstructs sound discernment and opens the door to doubt: "Did God really say?"

If you're like me, you might be saying to yourself, "Well, I've tried some of this before...I just can't seem to keep it up." Be encouraged: We can't pray enough, or read the Bible enough, to earn God's favor. He favors us because he's God and his Son died and rose again so we can be in direct relationship with him. That's what devotions are all about: growing closer to God and knowing him more. God keeps no record of wrongs for those in Christ. To try again, and even to fail again, is better than doing nothing at all. He wants us to spend time with him so that we might be more like Jesus.

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