

A Few thoughts on spending a half day in prayer

This time is about **hearing from God about the condition of your life before Him**. It is intended to be a time of attentive worshipful listening and crying out to Him. It is not *primarily* a time of intercession or planning, as helpful as those times can be. Having said that, God may have a totally different agenda for you along those lines. He is in charge. Do as He leads!

“23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Ps 139:23,24.

This is to be a **time of prayer rooted in the Word**. Use the Word liberally. Read it. Pray it. Sing it. Listen to it. Journal it. Meditate on it. Obey it. Stay in it. God will speak to you about your life through the Word by the gracious work of His Spirit. Keep listening in the Word!

“35 Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. 36 Turn my heart towards your statutes and not towards selfish gain.” Ps 119:35,36.

This is to be a **time of solitude**. Resist engaging in conversations or reading unrelated stuff. You really can be quiet for half a day and live to tell about it! Music is OK (ipods, etc...) if it serves to draw you to God and not distract you. Devotional guides are Ok, too (e.g. Valley of Vision), but they are the appetizer, whereas the Word is the main course. Use them to get you to the Word where you will meet God!

“23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone,” Mt 14:23.

“2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” Ps 42:2.

It will likely **take you a good bit of time** to wind down enough to begin to hear from God. Persist. Don't give up. As distractions and other matters come to mind, use this time to “cast your cares on Him”. Pray for “ears to hear”. You may need to walk a bit or change locations. There are many places to be alone here. Persevere. Don't give up! The promise is for those who seek Him with all their heart and soul!

“29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.” De 4:29.

“Cast all your cares on him, because he cares for you.” 1 Pet. 5.7

Journaling can be a great tool to focus your thoughts as well as recording them to pursue further later. It has a way of slowing you down enough to cause you to honestly reflect on the Word as it relates to your soul. In all likelihood, no one is ever going to read your journal. Let it be what it is; a humble, badly written, sin riddled tool to help you focus your thoughts on what God is saying to you. You can always burn it later if you need to!

“1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.” Heb 3:1.

Reflecting on the **condition of your soul** is vital. Ask God to show you things you need to repent of and turn from. Ask Him to show you things He wants to grow larger in your character. You can use the lists of deeds of the flesh to get started on the former and the fruit of the Spirit on the latter (see Gal. 5:19-26). Pray through these lists asking God to show you where your need is greatest to become more like Jesus.

“19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Ga 5:19-23.

Movement can be good. You don't have to kneel in prayer in one place for the entire time. Walk around, but pray while you walk. If it helps, jot down a verse on a scrap of paper to meditate on and pray through while you walk. Change locations. Variety of location and space can help you stay focused and stimulate you to worship and pray in new ways. Pray about what you are seeing and what it reveals to you about God. This is a beautiful place that has many reminders of the wonder of our Creator and Redeemer. Worship prompts abound everywhere you look! Worship Him as you walk about!

“28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.” Isa 40:28.

Above all, seek God! Seek Him in His Word. Seek Him in prayer. Seek Him in His creation. You are on a hunt to find God and hear from Him about the condition of your life before Him. Happy Hunting!

“6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.” Isa 55:6,7.

“3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.” Zep 2:3.

“58 I have sought your face with all my heart; be gracious to me according to your promise.” Ps 119:58.

Disclaimer: A half day of prayer likely will not transform you. Sorry to disappoint! But it could very likely change your orientation. Whether you are ultimately changed by this time will depend on to what degree you follow through on what God is showing you today. This time is a very important step in aligning your life with God's good purposes for you, but it is just the first step. Determine before you leave this day to be faithful to act on what God has spoken to you about today.

“21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”” Joh 14:21.

Additional core texts to meditate on:

Sermon on the Mount - Matt. 5-7 (especially the beatitudes in 6.1-16)

Great commandment & Commission - Mark 12.28-34; Matt. 28.18-20

Meditation on the Word's affect on our hearts and lives - Ps. 119

Fruit of the Spirit vs. the flesh – Gal. 5.19-23

Becoming like Christ in His humility and sacrificial love - Phil. 2.1-11

On Serving - John 13.1-17

The hope of the resurrection - 1 Cor. 15

Crucifixion/resurrection – Mark 15-16

Worship! – Rev. 1.4-8, 12-18; ch. 4-5; 7.9-17

The Hope & Glory of Heaven - Rev. 21, 22

Selected Psalms – 1, 8, 15, 19, 23, 25, 27, 31, 34, 40-42, 51, 63, 66, 70-71, 86, 90-96, 100, 103, 104, 112, 113, 115, 116, 119, 121, 123, 127, 128, 136, 139, 145, 147-150

Praise of God as Creator – Ps. 147, 148; Job 38-42

*Spend this time...
Hiking, Sitting, Resting, Watching, Listening, Reading, Worshiping,
Thanking, Repenting, Weeping, Rejoicing, Journaling, Interceding,
Singing, Pondering
... in the company of your Lord!*

“O Almighty God, from whom every good prayer cometh, and who pourest out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to thee, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind; that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affection we may worship thee in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

William Bright

“solitude begins with a time and a place for God, and God alone. If we really believe not only that God exists but also that God is actively present in our lives-- healing, teaching and guiding-- we need to set aside a time and space to give God our undivided attention.

(Matt 6:6)”

- Henri J.M. Nouwen

“We enter into solitude first of all to meet our Lord and to be with Him and Him alone. Only in the context of grace can we face our sin; only in the place of healing do we dare to show our wounds; only with a single-minded attention to Christ can we give up our clinging fears and face our own true nature. Solitude is a place where Christ remodels us in his own image and frees us from the victimizing compulsions of the world.”

- Henri J.M. Nouwen

“If I want to know the universal sovereignty of Christ. I must know Him for myself, and how to get alone with Him. I must take time to worship the Being Whose Name I bear.”

*- from My Utmost for His Highest
by Oswald Chambers*

“What could please God more than for us to leave the cares of the world temporarily in order to worship Him in our spirits? These momentary retreats serve to free us from our selfishness – which can only exist in the world... Although the habit is difficult to form, it is a source of divine pleasure once learned.”

- Brother Lawrence

“There are times when solitude is better than society, and silence is wiser than speech. We should be better Christians if we were more alone, waiting upon God, and gathering through meditation on His Word spiritual strength for labour in his service. We ought to muse upon the things of God, because we thus get the real nutriment out of them. . . . Why is it that some Christians, although they hear many sermons, make but slow advances in the divine life? Because they neglect their closets, and do not thoughtfully meditate on God's Word. They love the wheat, but they do not grind it; they would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it; the fruit hangs upon the tree, but they will not pluck it; the water flows at their feet, but they will not stoop to drink it. From such folly deliver us, O Lord. . . .”

— *Charles H. Spurgeon*

*In contemporary society our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry, and crowds.
Richard J. Foster*

Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers meeting together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become "unity" conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified.

A.W. Tozer

Discipline in the spiritual life is the concentrated effort to create the space and time where God can become our master and where we can respond to God's guidance. Thus, discipline is the creation of boundaries that keep time and space open for God - a time and place where God's gracious presence can be acknowledged and responded to.

Henri Nouwen

Extended Time Together with the Lord as a Couple

(This exercise is designed for the afternoon following individual half days of prayer that same morning.)

This time is to be set apart for you to commune with God together as a couple. It may be helpful for you to think about what this time is NOT. It is *not* a time...

- to plan things, to debate, to scheme about parenting, money or sex. Generally, this is *not* a planning, problem solving, argument-starting time.

It *is* a time to share what God is pressing on you as a husband and wife about your relationship with Him. It *is* a time to draw near to God and worship Him together and to listen to and pray for one another at a profoundly important and much neglected level.

These prompts may help as starters:

- **Spend time in worship together.**

- Select one of the Psalms listed below and read it together, alternating verses. When you have read it aloud, give praise to God in prayer for who He has shown Himself to be in what you have just read.
- Spend time giving thanks for the kindness of God in your lives! List the multitude of things you are thankful for and read 1 Chron. 16.8-36 aloud together (alternating verses if you like). Then take time together to give thanks in prayer (you can do this on a hike if you like, stopping often to give thanks).

- **Share what you understand to be the big issues that God has before you in becoming more like Christ.**

- Generally, contrary to our strengths but consistent with our callings, husbands should lead in listening and in praying about these matters. Have your wife share first, then pray for her, then trade places!
- Getting at this may involve sharing what God was impressing upon you earlier in the day during your time alone with Him. It may also involve sharing around questions like these:
 - *what is the great virtue you need to grow in/put on in order to become more like Christ? What is God calling/drawing you to become in your character?*
 - *what is the great vice you need to work at killing/putting off in order to become more like Christ? What is God revealing to you that dishonors Him in your character?*
 - *How would you describe your relationship with God right now? How do you wish you could describe it?*
 - *How can I pray for you? Tell me the things you need me to bring before God each day on your behalf.*

- **repent well and often!**

As you talk and share together, you may be made acutely aware of a way that you have sinned against your spouse that needs to be confessed and forsaken.

Go ahead! That's what this time is for! Just remember to "forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Col. 3.13)

• **some things to remember:**

- some of you need to walk and talk, while others need to sit and make full eye contact. Defer to one another in love!
- Some of your spouses are like turtles, rap on the shell and they pull back never to be seen again! This is a time to listen compassionately, encourage freely, and intercede passionately! It is NOT a time to critique or problem solve.
- persevere in this. If you hit a bump in your conversation, take a moment to pray and re-calibrate.
- remember that this time is not first and foremost about you. This is a time for you to worship God by serving your spouse in conversation and prayer.