

The Benefits of a Quiet Time

Where is God?"

A number of years ago we were invited to hear a speaker missionary at Fuller Seminary by the name of Stephen D. Eyre who had returned from England and he shared the following that fits perfectly with our topic today.

“My faith seemed like a burden, and the uncertain future appeared to be a dead end. And God was silent. Or if he was speaking and guiding, it was not apparent to me.

We were living in England on a short-term mission assignment. Our term was almost over, the lease on our house was about to expire, and my current ministry contract was coming to an end. Things did not look good for a new position on the other side of the Atlantic. I felt the weight of providing for my family. I knew I was supposed to trust God, but struggled with a sense of panic.

At one point I sensed a burning urge rising within me that seemed to say, *You aren't doing what you know*. Whether that “urge” came from God or my own insight I don't know. But it was right on target.

I had practiced quiet times for years, but in the crises of the past months they had become occasional and haphazard. So I renewed my commitment and set aside time in my schedule. No immediate deliverance came, although eventually God opened doors for me. What did happen was that I became able to believe that the God who brought me across the Atlantic could get me back. God was there after all.”

With that in mind, I need quiet times because I need God. He is the one who makes sense of life for me, in times of crisis or calm. **J. I. Packer** writes, “The world becomes a strange, mad, painful place and life in it a disappointing and unpleasant business, for those who do not know God. Disregard the study of God and you sentence yourself to stumble through life blindfolded, as it were, with no sense of direction and no understanding of what surrounds you. This way you can waste your life and lose your soul.”¹

In my quiet time I find the knowledge of God that makes sense of life. A quiet time is like a looking glass, a sort of magic mirror that lets me look into the deeper dimensions of life. Through the mirror I am able to see the reality of God's presence. I can look not only at God but also at myself. Without that mirror God seems distant, and I tend to lose my Christian perspective on the world around me.

I need the mirror of a quiet time to be a normal Christian. It's like the mirror in the bathroom. I suppose I could shave without it, but a few whiskers here and there would be

left uncut, and numerous razor nicks would appear. I also need the mirror on the closet door to make sure that my shirt is tucked in right and that my tie (when I wear one) is straight.

I need the mirror of a quiet time to show me that God is really present in my life. As a Christian I *believe* that he is. But my *experience* of spiritual reality tends to vary. Like most Americans, I have been conditioned to believe that my personal value depends on my productivity. Who has time to think about God when there is so much to do? As I look at my life in the mirror of my quiet time, I feel God's presence. I continue to be busy but feel less driven.

I also need the mirror to look into the depths of my soul. The lintel above the ancient Greek oracle in Delphi bore the words "**Know Thyself.**" A quiet time helps me do that. When I practice the discipline of a quiet time, I am able to look beneath my own surface. Who am I? What forces have shaped me? What needs, desires and fears direct me? Is God really at work within?

But looking in the mirror can also be threatening and uncomfortable. I have experienced quiet times when buried thoughts, motivations and unwanted emotions suddenly rose up. This scared me so much once that I stopped having quiet times for a while. Finally I picked up the mirror again because looking in it was the only way to get to the other side of my fears. In the presence of God the deep pains that surfaced were changed, cleansed and transformed. Most of all, I grew in the knowledge of God. Like Job I was able to say what I couldn't have said before: "**I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You**" ([Job 42:5 \(NASB\)](#)).

Discovering Quiet Times

I have not always been an advocate of quiet times. In the early years of my Christian life, I read the Bible like a novel or a textbook. I didn't read religiously or on a schedule; I just read. I prayed for things as I needed them, when I needed them. More often than not, I was delightfully surprised when my prayers were answered.

I first encountered the idea of a daily quiet time at a weekend conference during graduate school. I wasn't impressed. I felt it was for religious people who were into rituals and traditions. Over the next several years, however, I had a change of heart. I came to realize that just as my body needs regular meals to be healthy and energetic, so my relationship with God also needs regular nourishment. When I began to have a regular quiet time, I didn't experience any fireworks. But I felt good, as I did after walking a couple of miles. I knew that my quiet time would bring me spiritual knowledge, strength and endurance if I kept it up.

Getting Started

Sharing a quiet time with someone else is the best way to get started. For a number of years, I have met with diverse groups of people, explaining how to have a quiet time.

After we have gone through the spiritual exercises, we talk about the experience. Again and again I am delighted to discover that God is at work in me and my friends. I have coined the phrase “**guided quiet times**” to describe these meetings.

I wish that I could meet with you so that we could have a couple of guided times together. Since the chances of that are slim, I have included a guided quiet time at the end of each section. At the end of each quiet time I’ve noted which guide it is taken from. Each one includes an introduction that welcomes you into your time with God and sets a passage of Scripture into its context. Then step by step I lead you through Bible study, reflection questions and prayer.

All that you need for each quiet time is a Bible, writing materials (pen and notebook) and a desire to meet God. It is possible to go through the quiet times in five or six minutes while you briskly fill in the blanks. If you do that, I doubt that you will get much out of them. However, if you ponder the questions and prayerfully write out your responses, spending twenty minutes or more, I suspect that you will be delightfully surprised at what happens.

Guided Quiet Time

***God for You* ([Colossians 1:15–20](#))**

Thinking about God is important. **A. W. Tozer** wrote, “What comes into your mind when you think about God is the most important thing about you.”

Thinking about God is important, but it is not easy. Our impressions of other people are usually based on their physical appearance. Writers create mental images for us by describing a person’s appearance and behavior. But how do we describe someone who is invisible?

Our mental images of God come from a variety of sources—our parents, ministers or close friends who talk about God. Hollywood and the media communicate a contemporary image of God that varies from nonexistent to some vague impersonal force that we can learn to manipulate.

How can the human mind ever conceive of the infinite, eternal God? J. B. Phillips wrote a book about this with a great title, *Your God Is Too Small*. He feels that our images of God are too small and defective. Consider what the apostle Paul tells us about Jesus Christ: “**He is the *image of the invisible God.***”

Approach

What do you think God is like? Write down a description of the images that come to mind. Ask God to help you sort the images that are healthy from the ones that may be unhealthy.

Study

1. Read [Colossians 1:15–20](#). Paul uses a number of striking words and phrases to describe Jesus. He is the firstborn over all creation. Describe the extent of Jesus' authority and power.
2. Jesus is also the firstborn over the church. What does Paul mean by this?
3. In [verse 19](#) the apostle writes of the “**fullness of God**” dwelling in Jesus. False teachers used this term to refer to the “secret essence of the universe.” In contrast, what is Paul teaching about Jesus and his reconciling work?

Reflect

1. These descriptions of Jesus show what God is really like. How does this make you feel about God?
2. As I finished my quiet time for this day, I came up with these identifications of Jesus:

Visible God; Creator God; Personal God; Human God; Pain-Filled God; Peaceful God. Spend some time in prayer reflecting on Jesus as the Lord of all creation. Perhaps you could imagine him in heaven on a throne surrounded by divine beings who are in submission to him. Write down what you feel as you consider his glory.

3. Consider Jesus rising from the tomb on Easter morning. Perhaps you could see behind him the numberless others who will be raised from the dead. Consider yourself also as one of those who have been resurrected. Write what you feel as you consider the resurrection life he provides for you.

Pray

Choose one of the descriptions of Jesus listed above or think of your own, and respond with praise and thanksgiving for who he is and what he has done. Take your concerns and needs to him as well, knowing that he wants to respond to you.

Bibliography:

- ¹ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 19.