

Quiet Time Companions

One of the best ways to enhance our spiritual growth is to share our quiet time with at least one friend—a quiet time companion. Spiritual growth requires that we spend time alone. But once we have spent time alone with God, we need to be able to spend time with other believers.

A quiet time companion can enhance our spiritual growth. Sharing our quiet time with a spiritual friend helps us talk about God. In many Christian gatherings God is an assumed presence. We gather in His name. We sing songs *about* Him, and we pray *to* Him. But when it comes to His work in our lives, we often talk *around* Him. However, when we share our quiet times with someone, God is the subject of our conversation.

Sharing our quiet times can enhance spiritual discernment. We may not be aware of God's working in our lives until we talk about it with someone. Verbalizing our frustrations to a friend may help us see our problems as gifts sent to help us face an inner struggle that we had been avoiding.

Sharing our quiet times can protect us from error. We may think God is directing us in some way, but perhaps we are deceiving ourselves. As we share our hesitations and concerns, our friend can help us explore our sense of leading and consider it in the light of God's Word.

Guidelines

How do you find a friend with whom you can share your quiet time? First, look within your church or Christian fellowship for someone who displays a hunger for God. Pay attention to people who show up frequently. Their attendance may be motivated by spiritual interests. You may find someone at work who expresses interest in the spiritual life. Someone who shows his faith in a work environment is probably pursuing God.

Find someone who is on your spiritual level. A quiet time companion should be a spiritual friend. You want to avoid a discipling relationship, because it can inhibit openness and spiritual intimacy as you move into a one up/one down position.

Find someone who is worthy of your trust. You will be sharing some very intimate information about yourself. The first several times you meet together you may want to share in general terms. As trust grows over time, you can open up more of what you are learning about God and what He is doing inside your heart.

What do you do when you meet together? **First**, it must be clear that everything you say is confidential. You both must agree to say nothing about your meeting without permission, not even as a prayer request to a few "trusted" others.

Second, agree on when, where and how long to meet. You will need at least an hour for both to share. If possible, spend some time in quiet worship and prayer as well. Decide on the number of times you will meet. A period of six weeks is good to begin with. If things don't work out, you can easily terminate the arrangement. If your meetings are mutually beneficial, you can continue for another two or three months and then evaluate again.

Next, you need to establish the purpose of your meetings: to talk about your quiet times. You must avoid distractions, or you will end up talking about everything but God.

There is no best meeting procedure. Experiment to see what works for you. While one person shares, the role of the other is to listen and clarify with an accepting attitude. Never criticize, correct or counsel. The role of the listener is to be gracious, welcoming and affirming. Keep in mind that you are not there to psychologically analyze, counsel or fix each other. Your goal is to talk about what is happening in your quiet times.

The partner who listens must keep *two goals* in mind. **One** is to listen and ask questions that will help the speaker discern what the Lord may be doing and saying in his or her life. **The other goal** is to help the partner respond to God. When my partner asks me how I feel about God's work in my life, any resistance can be exposed. This opens up channels of communication. If I never face my resistance, my quiet time can slip into mere formalities and dry up.

What to Talk About

Sharing quiet time with a friend can yield helpful insights. Questions that we can ask each other include: Are we able to get quiet? How does our quiet feel? Is there a pull toward God or a dull, lifeless silence? Are we able to give our concerns over to God or do we cling to them and allow them to gnaw at us?

As we talk about settling, we may identify a concern that we can't let go. Perhaps a student is anxious about an upcoming test and can't turn it over to the Lord. Or perhaps a mother continually worries about one of her children at school. Perhaps a businessperson can't turn over concerns about year-end profits.

Such struggles may point to areas of life that have not been brought under the lordship of Christ. The student struggling with the test may fear letting down her parents or damaging future career prospects. The mother may wonder if God can be trusted for her child because a friend of hers from childhood once got hurt. The businessperson may be anxious about profits because of overspending on home remodeling. In prayer he needs to face his stewardship of his resources. As these root issues come out, it is possible to pray about them and see specific results.

In sharing what happens during our settling time, we can examine our emotions. There may be a sense of gratitude. This is the work of the spirit that cries "**Abba, Father**" within us. It indicates spiritual health. Or there may be a sense of deadness.

As we talk about this with a friend, we may discover buried anger. Once we have uncovered our anger, we can tell God about it, seek guidance about a proper response and move on. As we bring these areas to the Lord, we give over the pain of the past and thus free ourselves from its control. Between gratitude and deadness is a sense of turbulence. Anxieties and fears experienced in our quiet time mean that our hearts are alive to God, but there are issues to be worked through. Pay attention to this emotional turbulence and ask God to clear it.

As we share our quiet time, we can also explore what is happening in our study and meditation of Scripture. Quiet time companions can ask each other questions that include: What new insight or knowledge did you learn about God? What seemed to strike your heart in a new way? What seemed to apply to your immediate situation? What do you think that God was asking you to do?

Sharing discoveries from Scripture can be especially invigorating for both partners. Shared insights tend to feed on each other. I may experience new insights when I hear my friend share about the benefits of perseverance from [Romans 5](#). My struggles may take on new meaning as I am reminded that God uses such struggles to work patience into my character.

One of the benefits of sharing study and insights is that we can hold each other accountable. If what my friend is saying about a passage does not make sense as I read over it, I must ask for further clarification. If I just can't see the point, then I must say so. Too often we treat Scripture as putty that we shape to mean what we want it to. Spiritual partners can help each other avoid this temptation.

In sharing quiet times I frequently use the exercise of listing experiences, emotions and perceptions (see previous lesson # 7). In describing to another what has happened for the past week or so and verbalizing how I felt about it, I can frequently begin to discern God's working.

Once I was sharing from my **"Perceptions"** column about God's working in my life. Nothing was working out to my expectations, and I felt frustrated. As I talked about this with Gary, he wondered if God was asking me to give up a sense of control. As we explored this possibility, it became clear that God was asking me to **"let go."** But I did not know exactly how I was supposed to let go. As a few months passed, it became clear that some ministry programs in the church needed radical changes. Changing them was hard, but not as hard as it could have been. I had already been warned. I knew that God was involved in shaping the ministry programs for his purposes, and I could let go by allowing them to change.

Finally, quiet time companions can ask each other questions about their prayers: Who do you feel especially called to pray for? Do you sense that God is hearing your prayers? What answers to prayers have you recently received? What do you find difficult to pray about?

As we talk about our prayers with a friend, we can begin to see God's leading in them. Our prayers for others can start out with a general request such as "God, please help Gary in his job," or "Please help Steve deal with the discipline problems at home." As we pray, we may gain insight on how to pray for John's work situation or what specifically to ask for Carl as he sets godly limits for his son. Discussing our sense of leading in prayer with another can clarify just how God is leading us.

Talking about our prayers with a friend helps us discern areas of our own prayer life that need more attention. At one point I was struggling with my calling. I had a sense that God was calling me to another ministry. I found it very difficult to pray about what I should do. When I shared this struggle, I discovered some unresolved pain with a couple of colleagues. Before I could pray freely about my future, I had to face these relational issues.

As we share our prayers with a friend, our faith that God answers prayers will grow. Together we will share a sense of mutual mission in seeking God's kingdom and working together to do his will on earth. There is nothing more exciting and fulfilling than this.

Summary: Questions for Discussion

**Settling Down
and
Warming Up**

- Are we able to get quiet?*
 - What is the tone or feel of our quiet?*
 - Is there a pull toward God or a dull lifeless silence?*
 - Are we able to give our concerns over to God or do we cling to them and allow them to gnaw at us?*
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**Reading and
Study**

- What new information are we learning about God?*
 - What seemed to strike our hearts in a new way?*
 - What seemed to apply to our immediate situation?*
 - What do we think God may be asking us to do?*
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**Reflection and
Meditation**

- How do we see God working in our lives?*
 - What may God be saying to us through our experiences?*
 - What may God be asking us to do in and through our circumstances?*
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Prayer

- Whom do we feel especially called to pray for?*
 - Do we have a sense that God is hearing our prayers?*
 - What answers to prayers have we recently received?*
 - What do we find difficult to pray about?*
 - Are we able to ask for help?*
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Overall Issues

- Do we have a sense of meeting with God?*
 - How are we responding to God?*
 - What might the Lord be saying to us?*
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Having a Quiet Time Together

Not only is it helpful to talk about our quiet times, but it can be very helpful to have a quiet time together. Initially it may seem strange, two people sitting in a room being quiet for twenty or thirty minutes. However, it can be extremely powerful. There is something enriching about the shared silence. Many times I find the room is filled with the Lord's presence in a warm, full quiet that is often tender and affectionate. I used to think this was my imagination. But more often than not, my partner shared the same sense of presence.

What do you do in a quiet time together? After a period of quiet that allows you to settle, look at Scripture and pray. Follow the usual procedure. However, because you have been working through your quiet time together, there is a sense of immediacy and freshness about it. You aren't sharing about quiet times over the past week or two, you are sharing about what happened in the past fifteen or twenty minutes.

Sharing a quiet time as well as meeting to talk about our quiet times challenges the secularized mindset that we have inherited from our culture. We have been socialized not to speak about God in public. We tend to carry this mindset into our private lives and our Christian gatherings. However, as we talk about our quiet times, we learn to recognize God's presence. We open up our spiritual ears and reverse the process of God-blindness. We begin to repair the rods and cones of our spiritual eyes. God becomes more than someone we know *about*. We know *Him* from our personal experience and experiences with friends. As we have quiet times in which we meet with God, not only do we learn to be with God but we learn to see and hear Him in all his world.

Guided Quiet Time

We Are Chosen ([Ephesians 1:1-6](#))

In a seminar on prayer I asked participants to chart their lives on a large sheet of paper. The charts were to illustrate the role of prayer in their lives.

During the sharing time, a couple of themes emerged. **First**, prayer was more prevalent in the ups and the downs of life than in the plateaus. **Second**, in the hard times prayer grew from a response to God. It wasn't so much that people prayed and God answered, as that God began to help and then we asked for it.

Does that seem strange to you? It was to me, until I thought about it in the light of the Scriptures. As with all religions, Christianity shares a belief in a divine being who should be worshiped. In other religions, the divine being is pursued for favors. **In contrast, Ephesians teaches us that God's nature is to seek us out first.**

Approach

We all have needs. These needs can hinder us from knowing God, or they can help us know Him better. A first step in spiritual growth is understanding our needs.

The next step is knowing how to give them to God so that he can help us. Begin your approach to God today by asking Him to bring your needs to mind. As you write them down, ask God to share the burdens with you.

Study

1. Read [Ephesians 1:1–6](#). Paul refers to Jesus Christ in each of the three lines of his greeting ([vv. 1–2](#)). Read over these verses several times. What can you discern about the apostle Paul, the Ephesians and God from his greeting?

2. God the Father is the subject of praise in [verses 3–6](#). Reread these verses several times as well. How would you describe Paul's attitude towards God?

3. Paul's enthusiasm is a result of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. According to [verses 3–5](#), what specific results come into the life of a Christian because we are chosen and loved by God?

4. Explain the role of the Father and the role of Jesus Christ in bringing us these benefits.

Reflect

1. In [verse 3](#) Paul writes that **“we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.”** Imagine that you have made it safely to heaven. How do you think it will feel?

In Christ you are assured of that eternal safety. What difference does this knowledge make in the way you live?

2. The first spiritual blessing Paul mentions is that we are chosen by God. Think about a time when you were chosen for a task or given a special honor. How did it affect you?

How much greater is the privilege of being chosen by God! Picture yourself in a crowd at a beach. As you are standing there, Jesus comes along and invites you to follow him. How do you respond? What anticipations and reservations do you experience?

Pray

Thank God for the spiritual blessings that He has given you.

Ask God to give you the same attitude of gratitude that is reflected in the apostle Paul.