

# Practical Suggestions on How To Spend Time With God

Intimate fellowship with Christ was the purpose of both creation and the cross: "*God... has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord...*" ([1 Corinthians 1:9b](#)) Here are a few suggestions on how to cultivate that intimacy:

1. Make the time regular — preferably in the morning:

Set a goal of 5 days a week, minimum. Solitude and silence should grace the time. If you are new at it, start with 10 minutes. The time will pass surprisingly quickly and soon you will find yourself expanding it to more.

2. Have a specific place where you can be alone:

- The patio
- The car
- The bathroom
- A closet

3. Include in your time:

- Worship
- Thanksgiving
- Confession of sin
- Petition (asking God for answers)
- Intercession (prayers for others) – Make a list of people

4. Read and meditate over Scripture:

Set up an ordered sequence. I find I get more when I take a slow, measured, and in depth approach, rather than race through a specified number of chapters a day. Begin by meditating from a Psalm and a portion of a Proverb. As your appetite (and allotted time) expands, you may also want to add a segment from the New Testament. Once this pattern is well established, you may then want to add a portion from the Old Testament.

5. Journal:

Write down what you are gleaning from the Scriptures. I find using different colored pens to circle and underline principles and key words or ideas is helpful.

With appropriate passages ask, "What does this text teach me about Jesus?" Write it down.

Write out a prayer that relates to the passage. Also, jot down specific answers to prayer.

Record applications you are making from your time of prayer and meditation on the Scriptures.

**QUESTION:** If you are not consistent in your time alone with God, are you willing to begin now by taking the necessary time and effort to develop constancy in this critical area of your life?

# Perhaps One of Our Problems Is That We Know Too Much

**INFORMATION OVERLOAD:** Exposure to an endless array of tapes, sermons, books, articles, seminars, and Christian radio.

*Why is it that with all this information at our fingertips our lives are often out of joint, our marriages strained, and victory over sin remains an illusive ideal?*

For one thing, we wrongly *assume* that knowledge of the truth will change our lives, when in reality it only heightens our awareness, and increases our guilt. Surprisingly, the Scriptures suggest that exposure to too much knowledge may actually be ruinous:

- *"In much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain."*  
([Ecclesiastes 1:18](#))
- *"The writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearing to the body."*  
([Ecclesiastes 12:12](#))
- *"Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."*  
([2 Timothy 3:7](#))

So what is missing? Consider [Hebrews 4:2](#):

*"For indeed we have had the good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them because it was not united by faith in those who heard."*

Exposure to the truth is of no value to us unless that truth is translated into faith as evidenced by obedience. For three years Judas Iscariot lived with the Truth, but ended his life in suicide. Familiarity with the Truth without application spelled personal destruction.

James reminds us to:

*"Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves."* ([James 1:22](#))

So, our problem lies not in the fact that we need more truth. Rather, we simply need to respond in faith and obedience to the truth we already possess!

# How Is It Going in the "Time With God" Department?

So... How *IS* it going in the "Time With God" Department?

- Rushed?
- Shallow?
- Dutiful?

Or do you have it under control with:

- Quality time...
- Regular time...
- At the level where the tap roots of your soul are being fed?

E. M. Bounds cautions us that "TO BE LITTLE WITH GOD IS TO BE LITTLE FOR GOD."

Keep in mind: Satan's strategy is to *dull* your *spiritual hunger* by playing upon your inclination towards:

- Procrastination
- Materialism
- Sensuality
- Over work

"Take care... lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." ([Hebrews 3:12, 13](#)).

Let's be honest enough to admit that basically we do *exactly* what we want to do, finding time for:

- Golf
- T.V.
- Favored friends
- Etc.

And let's be reminded that a *casual approach* to knowing God simply won't cut it:

"You shall seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." ([Jeremiah 29:1](#))

Passion and pursuit are the criteria for knowing God. Are you committed enough to rise to and sustain the challenge?

# Mushrooms *or* Redwood Trees?

Mushrooms sprout overnight.

Redwood trees take over a century.

When it comes to growing into spiritually mature men and women we often have the *illusion* that it can be done overnight; that somehow through certain spiritual experiences or the expression of the gifts, the *process* of spiritual growth can be hurried up or short-circuited. When we go this route, we end up with squashy, weak, spiritual mushrooms: People who are here today and gone tomorrow.

If, on the other hand we understand that the *process* of spiritual maturity takes a great deal of time, energy, nourishing, and just plain living through the storms of life, we may actually end up with spiritual Redwoods: Tall, stately paragons of strength and beauty that give nourishment and shelter to others amidst the harshness of life.

Because obedience to God's Word is generic to this maturing process, let me put forth four suggestions on how to build the Word of God into your life:

1. **STUDY IT THROUGH** – Choose a verse or passage. Discipline your mind to carefully analyze it, asking the question, "*What exactly is the meaning here?*" Come at it as an academician.

*"Correctly analyzing and accurately dividing the Word of Truth."* ([2 Timothy 2:15b](#) – Amplified)

2. **PRAY IT IN** – Once you understand the Biblical truth, surrender your will to it. Search your soul over it. Absorb it into your bloodstream. Prayerfully ask God to build it into your life.
3. **WORK IT OUT** – Ask the question, "*What can I do in a practical way to apply this truth to my life... to my situation?*" For example, you might write an application as follows: "*Starting today, we in our company will no longer exaggerate what our product can deliver to the public. Along with its strengths, we will explain its limitations.*"
4. **PASS IT ON** – Once the truth of the Scriptures have become an integral part of your life, it is only natural that you bear fruit by passing it on to others. Spiritual multiplication:

*"But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop."* ([Luke 8:15](#))

**QUESTION:** Judging from your present relationship with the Word of God, are you in the process of becoming a spiritual redwood tree, or simply settling in as a mushroom?

# "Cherry Picking" the Scriptures

Have you ever picked cherries? The idea is to choose the ripe ones while ignoring the rest.

Some of us "cherry pick" the Scriptures by selecting the truths we like while disregarding the others.

And what we like to pick from the Scriptures are the truths that insure God's promises of material blessings, healing, and general well-being, while ignoring His demands for separation from sin; living a life of integrity, purity, and servanthood.

If we are "cherry picking" the Scriptures, we are guilty of reducing the Word of God and Jesus Christ to a servile role that caters to our insatiable self-love.

Conversely, Paul, in preaching God's Word resisted the temptation of "cherry picking" the Scriptures: "*I have not hesitated to proclaim the whole will of God.*" ([Acts 20:27](#))

Some time ago I counseled a businessman who, along with his partners, were *knowingly* marketing a product that was *defrauding* their customers. Imagine it! These men who supposedly had been touched by the love of Christ were using their position as leaders in the Christian community to exploit others! Apparently Scriptural "cherry picking" had dulled their conscience to make such behavior palatable.

Paul cautioned us: "*Live as free men, But do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil... to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.*" ([1 Peter 2:16](#); [Galatians 5:13](#))

**QUESTION:** Are you *ruthlessly* applying *all the Scriptures* to your life, or are you *selectively* "cherry picking" the ones that pander your narcissistic tendencies?

*In Conclusion:*

The next time you are tempted to soften your stance on integrity by "cherry-picking" the Scriptures you *choose* to apply, keep in mind Jesus' warning,

"*If anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life, and in the holy city...*" ([Revelation 22:19a](#))

# Applying the Scriptures to Your Life

As you spend time with the Lord meditating over a portion of Scripture, you may find it helpful to ask the following questions:

- Is there an *example* to follow?
- Is there a *sin* to avoid?
- Is there a *promise* to claim?
- Is there a *prayer* to repeat?
- Is there a *command* to obey?
- Is there a *condition* to meet?
- Is there a *verse* to memorize?
- Is there an *error* to mark?
- Is there a *challenge* to face?

If you would like *practice* in utilizing the above questions, read and meditate upon [Luke 14:25-17:10](#).

# Is It Possible to Integrate Biblical Values into Your Professional Life?

Yes! Jesus did it. And so can you!

As a young man, Jesus Christ was in the carpentry business. Can you *imagine* Him delivering an inferior piece of furniture to a customer?

- Or deceiving people through an advertising campaign?
- Or inflating sale prices beyond reasonable profit margins?
- Or failing to give top notch service *after* the sale?
- Or underpaying the employees in His carpentry shop?

Can you *conceive* of Jesus telling the local rabbi, "*Well, times are tough. It's unrealistic to literally apply Biblical principles to business, given the realities of today's business climate. We have to bend the rules here and there to survive*"? Hardly.

The fact is that Jesus lived a life of total integrity... and He expects the same of us:

*"(He) has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin..."* ([Hebrews 4:15](#))

Dr. Laura Nash, suggests five questions we might ask ourselves as we seek to apply Biblical ethics to business:

1. Am I hiding something?
2. Am I hurting anyone?
3. How does it look from the other person's point of view?
4. Have I discussed this face-to-face?
5. What would I tell my child to do?

If we are unable to integrate Biblical values into our business or profession, perhaps we need to reevaluate our vocation or calling.

# Discipling Someone? Consider These Areas of Concentration

One: Engage them in the Scriptures to discover Christ and apply His truth.

Teaching others to meditate upon and apply God's Word is generic to knowing Christ.

*"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."* ([John 14:21](#))

Two: Disciple them life-on-life.

Both Jesus and Paul believed in the worth of the individual, and so should we:

Jesus: *"The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, 'Follow me'."* ([John 1:43](#))

Paul: *"We dealt with you one by one, as a father deals with his children..."* ([1 Thessalonians 2:11b](#) NEB)

Three: Equip them to multiply their life:

- By helping them develop consistency in (1) Daily time with God, (2) Scripture memory, and (3) Bible study.

*"The Scriptures are the comprehensive equipment of the man of God, and fit him fully for all branches of his work."* ([2 Timothy 3:17](#) – J.B. Phillips Translation)

- By helping them discover and utilize their gifts. ([1 Corinthians 12-14](#))

Four: Maintain the centrality of Christ.

At the very core of the discipling effort must be the emphasis on developing intimacy with Christ.

*"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."* ([1 Corinthians 3:10, 11](#))

QUESTION: Since example is the most powerful teacher, developing intimacy with Christ is better "caught" than taught. Is your disciple picking up the fact that knowing Christ is your primary passion?

*"Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ."* ([1 Corinthians 11:1](#))



# Simple Approach to Dig Deeper into God's Word

If you want to dig deeper into God's Word, then try this simple approach:

Choose *a short* passage of Scripture. Then:

I. READ the passage: (We'll use [Matthew 9:9-13](#) for our example)

*"As Jesus went on from there he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. Follow Me," He told him, and Matthew got up and followed Him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with Him and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this they asked His disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?' On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

II. RECORD the facts:

[vs. 9](#) – Jesus tells Matthew to follow Him. Matthew obeys.

[vs. 10](#) – Jesus and His disciples have dinner with Matthew and his friends: tax collectors and "sinners."

[vs. 11](#) – The Pharisees question Jesus' disciples as to why He ate with such people.

[vs. 12, 13](#) – Jesus hears about it and responds:

- The "sick", not the healthy need a doctor.
- God desires mercy over religious observance ("*sacrifice*").
- Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

III. REFLECT on the *implications* of the facts for our life:

- "*I wonder if I am as immediate and responsive to Jesus' call to discipleship as was Matthew.*"
- "*Do I still have lost friends whom I am introducing to Jesus, as did Matthew?*"

IV. RESPOND by applying one of the *implications to your life*:

*"I am convicted that I have not been more active in introducing my lost friends to Christ. Within 2 months I will have a dinner party for several of them, and plan to share how Christ has changed my life."*

For further practice you may want to try the following passages: [John 18:1-11](#); [Psalm 23](#); [Ecclesiastes 5:18-20](#); [Genesis 3:1-7](#); [Colossians 3:12-16](#); [John 18:15-18, 25-27](#); [Revelation 1:12-18](#)

# The Power of Words

Alfred, a friend of mine, decided to visit Gold's Gym. This is the place where men the size of boxcars seem to have nothing else to do but "pump iron" by the eon. As he entered, a square-jawed, muscle-bound, steel-gripping specimen grasped his hand and exclaimed, "HI! BIG GUY!"

Now Alfred, an accountant who has never lifted anything much heavier than a paperweight, thought to himself, "Is he talking to me? Does he think I am a 'BIG GUY?'" And with that he entered Gold's determined to do something about his sagging coat hanger-sized deltoids.

Talk about THE POWER OF WORDS!

Ever call your kid "stupid"? Or, "lazy"? Or scold him with, "Can't you ever do anything right?" Guess what? Your words become self-fulfilling prophecies. When I was a teenager, a close relative said to me, "I don't trust you." And from that day on I determined to give her reason not to trust me, and I became a juvenile delinquent. Again, THE POWER OF WORDS!

Solomon drove home THE POWER OF WORDS in stating, "*The tongue has the power of life and death...*" ([Proverbs 18:21a](#))

Instead of calling the kid "stupid," why don't you grab him (or her) by the shoulders and say, "Wow, you are something! Am I ever proud of you! What a privilege it is for me to be your parent!" Like my friend Alfred, the kid might just decide to do something about his coat hanger-sized life and rise to your expectation. Again, THE POWER OF WORDS!

Nathaniel, upon hearing of Jesus Christ, made a derogatory remark concerning his place of birth, "*Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" Instead of retaliating, the Master drew attention to Nathaniel's integrity, "*Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false*". And Nathaniel's response? Instant belief: "*Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.*" ([John 1:45-51](#)) Clearly, Jesus understood and demonstrated THE POWER OF WORDS.

Paul appreciated THE POWER OF WORDS in asserting, "*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...*" ([Ephesians 4:29a](#))

**QUESTION:** When was the last time you used THE POWER OF WORDS to build up your spouse with a kind word, or a note of encouragement? Or an employee? Or a colleague? Or one of your kids? Silence – saying nothing – is usually interpreted negatively by others as anger, indifference or disapproval... As anything but affirmation.

The behemoth at Gold's Gym understands THE POWER OF WORDS!

*Do you?*

# Five Reasons Why We Fail to Apply God's Word to Our Lives

Let's admit it! Basically we are rebels at heart! We want to do our own thing. It's called the "*Frank Sinatra Syndrome*", we want to do everything "My Way!" And in our rebellion we disallow God's Word to penetrate and thus transform our lives. Here are five reasons why we do it:

**IGNORANCE** – The litmus test of our love for Christ is [John 14:21](#). Nothing more. Nothing less: "*Whoever has my commandments and obeys them, he is the one who loves me...*" You cannot obey what you do not know. Let me ask you, "*Do you have the Scriptures?*" Or better yet, "*Do the Scriptures have you?*" (See [Ezra 7:10](#))

**CHERRY-PICKING** the Scriptures. That is, we select what we like while avoiding difficult truths that focus on servanthood, suffering for the Gospel, holiness of life, etc. We love to hear about Peter's deliverance from prison, but shy away from the idea that John the Baptist's faith cost him his head. ([Acts 12:1-17](#); [Mark 6:16-29](#)) By way of contrast, Paul was careful to give the Ephesians the whole counsel (purpose) of God ([Acts 20:27](#)) (Compare [Hebrews 11:1-35a](#) with [11:35b-40](#))

**FORGETFUL** – We look into the mirror of the Word, note the needed changes, and tend to walk away, forgetting to make the application. The consequence? Self-deception. ([James 1:22-25](#)) Jesus pointed out that "*the world's worries and the taste of wealth and the passions for other interests*" distract us from applying the Word of God to our lives ([Mark 4:19](#) Berkeley Translation. See [Deuteronomy 8:11, 14, 19](#)).

**VACILLATING** – Peter instructs us that the "*unstable*" (vacillating) distort the Scriptures "*to their own destruction.*" ([2 Peter 3:16b](#)) In Jesus' "Parable of the Sower," the believer begins to apply God's Word to his life, but then incurs "*trouble or persecution.*" And because of his shallow roots, he vacillates and falls away ([Mark 4:16, 17](#)).

**DISTORTING** – In our ignorance or instability, we (literally) "*torture, twist, wrench, or pervert*" the Word of God (Cinderella's sister and the shoe?) rather than face up to its exact meaning. The consequences? Our "*destruction.*" ([2 Peter 3:16](#) – See [2 Peter 2:1](#); [2 Corinthians 4:2](#))

**QUESTION:** Are there changes you need to make now, to ensure the fact that when you face Him, you will stand unashamed? ([2 Corinthians 5:9-11](#))

"*Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing [rightly handling and skillfully teaching] the Word of Truth.*" ([2 Timothy 2:15](#) – Amplified)