

# Helps for your Day Alone With God

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# The Spiritual Disciplines

The following excerpts are from Dallas Willard's book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines* (Harper Collins, 1988). In chapter nine, entitled "Some Main Disciplines for the Spiritual Life," the author lists and discusses several disciplines under two categories – the disciplines of abstinence and the disciplines of engagement.

## The Disciplines of Abstinence

"We abstain to some degree and for some time from the satisfaction of what we generally regard as normal and legitimate desires." (p. 159)

**Solitude** – "We purposefully abstain from interaction with other human beings, denying ourselves companionship and all that comes from our conscious interaction with others." (p. 160)

**Silence** – "We close ourselves off from 'sounds, whether those sounds be noise, music or words.'" (p.163)

**Fasting** – "We abstain in some significant way from food and possibly drink as well." (p. 166)

**Frugality** – "We abstain from using money or goods at our disposal in ways that merely gratify our desires or our hunger for status, glamour, or luxury. Practicing frugality means we stay within the bounds of what general good judgment would designate as necessary for the kind of life to which God has led us." (p. 168)

**Chastity** – "We purposefully turn away from dwelling upon or engaging in the sexual dimension of our relationships to others--even our husbands or wives." (p. 170)

**Secrecy** – "We abstain from causing our good deeds or qualities to be known." p.172)

**Sacrifice** – "We abstain from the possession or enjoyment of what is necessary for our living--not, as in frugality . . . the discipline of sacrifice is one in which we forsake the security of meeting our needs with what is in our hands. It is total abandonment to God, a stepping into the darkened abyss in the faith and hope that God will bear us up." (p. 174-5)

## Disciplines of Engagement

These disciplines of action provide the power for growth and development in the spiritual life.

**Study** – We engage ourselves in the written word of God. This includes reading, hearing, inquiring and meditating on what comes before us. "We withdraw into silence where we prayerfully and steadily focus upon it". (p. 177)

**Worship** – "We engage ourselves with, dwell upon, and express the greatness, beauty, and goodness of God through thought and the use of words, rituals, and symbols. We do this alone as well as in union with God's people. To worship is to see God as worthy, to ascribe great worth to him."

**Celebration** – “We enjoy ourselves, our life, our world, in conjunction with our faith and confidence in God’s greatness, beauty, and goodness. We concentrate on our life and world as God’s work and as God’s gift to us.” (p. 179)

**Service** – “We engage our goods and strength in the active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world.” It is to serve another with the purpose of training “myself away from arrogance, possessiveness, envy, resentment, or covetousness. In that case my service is undertaken as a discipline for the spiritual life.” (p. 182)

**Prayer** – “When we pray we talk to God, aloud or within our thoughts”. (p. 185)

**Fellowship** – “We engage in common activities of worship, study, prayer, celebration, and service with other disciples.” (p. 186)

**Confession** – “We let trusted others know our deepest weaknesses and failures.” (p. 187)

**Submission** – “We engage the experience of those in our fellowship who are qualified to direct our efforts in growth and who then add the weight of their wise authority on the side of our willing spirit to help us do the things we would like to do and refrain from the things we don’t want to do.” (p.190)

## **Scripture verses about the Spiritual Life and Disciplines**

1. Psalm 42:1-2 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. [2] My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?
2. Psalm 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.
3. Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
4. Isaiah 26:8-9 Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the desire of our hearts. [9] My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.
5. Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.
6. Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
7. Philip. 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
8. Col. 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.
9. 1 Thes. 5:17 Pray continually.
10. Psalm 1:2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.
11. Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
12. Jeremiah 15:16 When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.

13. Romans 7:22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law.
14. Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.
15. Eph. 6:13-18 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand . . . [17] Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. [18] And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.
16. Philippians 3:7-8 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.
17. Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

# Planning a Day Alone with God

## The Purpose of a Prayer Retreat - Duewel

(From Chapter 31 of Touch the World Through Prayer by Wesley Duewel)

The purpose of your personal prayer retreat may be to draw near to God. “Come near to God and he will come near to you” (James 4:8). “But as for me, it is good to be near God” (Ps 73: 28). Oh, what a privilege to spend time close to the heart of Jesus!

You may desire time alone with God because you need to discover His will in some matter of great importance. Don't be embarrassed. He wants you to understand His will. He has a “good, pleasing, and perfect will” for you (Rom 12:2). He wants “to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Col. 1:9). He may reveal some new direction to you during your prayer retreat. He has done this for me. Or He may begin a process, which will lead to your full understanding at a later time. He loves you so much He wants you to know and do His will.

You may desire this extended time alone with God out of concern for an important or urgent need. The need may be for some aspect of God's cause, for your nation or community, for some friend or loved one, or for yourself. Do not hesitate to pray for personal needs.

## How to Plan for a Prayer Retreat - Duewel

1. *Plan for a place for prayer where you will be undisturbed.*

On several occasions in India, when privacy was at a premium, I took a train to the next stop and spent the day in the railway waiting room, reading and praying. Though the conditions were not ideal, for there were people all around me, I was relatively undisturbed.

A number of our OMS-related churches in Korea have in their church building several prayer rooms just large enough for one person. Any member can come at any time, leave his or her shoes outside the little door to show the room is occupied, and spend hours or even a day or two praying there. Other churches have a special prayer house in the mountains, available to any member of the church.

When my wife and I were serving as missionaries in India, we went to Landour, Mussoorie, in the Himalayas for several weeks in the summer to escape the oppressive heat. I found some ideal spots on the mountainsides for my prayer retreats - one, only nine miles beyond Landour. Several times during each hot season, I would slip out at daybreak, walk the nine miles to the spot, and spend the day alone with the Lord. Oh, what blessed times!

In the city of Allahabad, I had an arrangement with friends to use an empty storage room in a kind of outbuilding as a place of retreat. There was no phone there or people who could interrupt my time alone with God. At other times I have used an empty room of a church building.

If you sincerely desire to seek Him in prolonged fellowship, He will lead you to the place.

2. *Schedule a time when you can be free from pressures and interruptions.*

For some people Sunday afternoon is a good time for a shorter prayer retreat. Consider spending part of your vacation, or choose some office holiday for a longer retreat. Perhaps a half-night of prayer could be planned, beginning at suppertime. You might want to skip your evening meal and strengthen your prayer time with a brief fast.

3. *Collect all the supplies you will need.*

A list of items to take along on your prayer retreat might include (a) Bible, (b) hymnbook, (c) notebook and pen, (d) concordance (if your Bible does not include one), (e) one or two other translations of the Bible or of the New Testament alone, (f) devotional book or a book on revival, prayer, or the Holy Spirit, (g) flashlight (if necessary), (h) cushion or something to kneel on, (i) watch or alarm clock (especially if you are planning several days of prayer), (j) adequate wraps, and (k) your prayer diary.

4. *Inform someone where you may be reached in case of emergency.*

Though you will not publicize this sacred time alone with God, you will want to notify some member of your church or family where you will be spending these hours or days. After the retreat you may need to refer to it, especially if someone tried to contact you in your absence, but this should be done matter-of-factly. There is a place for testimony, but be careful to give all the glory to God and not attract attention to yourself.

5. *Begin the retreat as rested as possible.*

If you plan a prayer retreat of several days' duration, you will need to be properly refreshed for your time with the Lord. It is perfectly spiritual to sleep when your body demands it. At some point during your retreat, you may want to take a brief nap before resuming your prayer and meditation. Here, your alarm clock will come in handy.

## **How to Invest Your Prayer Time - Duewel**

God may direct you to vary your methods of prayer from time to time. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide you. However, the following suggestions may be helpful.

1. *Begin your prayer time with joyful worship.*

Psalm 100:4 exhorts us to enter God's presence with thanksgiving and praise. Take time to thank God for who He is, for His love and other attributes, for His leaving heaven to come to earth, for His loving deeds, for His death and resurrection, for His goodness to you, for His beautiful creation, for your Christian friends, and for church.

The word pictures in the Book of Revelation suggest that the angels, other heavenly beings, and God's saints sing also (Rev. 4:8-11; 5:6-14; 7:9-12; 14:2-3; 15:2-4; 19:1-7). God loves singing. There were singing and rejoicing in heaven before there was a human being on earth (Job 38:7). God Himself is pictured as singing with joy over us or perhaps with us (Zeph. 3:17). God created birds, men, and angels to sing. You give joy to the heart of God when you sing His praises, whether audibly or in your heart.

Some of the great hymns of the church are hymns of praise. You will want to memorize some of the verses and choruses to use from time to time in your daily prayer times.

I have found that my heart begins to thrill with joy as I near the place and time for special prayer. I am going to be alone with Jesus! How sacred! How wonderful! How blessed!

## *2. Begin to feed upon God's Word.*

Normally it is important to listen to God first. Listening is as important as speaking; feasting on the Word is as important as interceding. You can often hear His voice through the reading of His Word. Take all the time you need to saturate your heart with the Word. You may at times want to read some portions of Scripture on your knees. It is often wise to continue your systematic reading of the Bible rather than to skip around. On the other hand, you may feel led to begin by reading a portion of the Psalms - perhaps as many as twenty-five or more - or to read through one of the Gospels or the Epistles. Freely follow the suggestion made by the Holy Spirit to your heart.

Read to be blessed. Don't prepare formal Bible studies or read analytically, unless the Lord directs you to do so. Just feast on God's Word and God's goodness. You are preparing your heart to commune with Him, to worship at His feet, to intercede for others, and to win prayer battles. In all of these, the Word of God lays an enduring foundation.

## *3. Focus your prayer on God's interests.*

In the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray, His priorities were (a) the hallowing of the name of God the Father (His reverence, honor, and glory), (b) the coming of God's kingdom (the total fulfillment of God's plan for the church and the world, the advance of His rule over and among men, and the final return of Jesus), and (c) the fulfilling of God's will on earth here and now. These elements should be a part of your daily prayer concern, but particularly of extended prayer periods.

Pray for revival among the people of God. Pray that the church as a whole may exhibit holiness of life, separation from the attitudes and actions of the world, and an overflowing love toward all people, especially toward one another. Then the unsaved will say again today what they said in the first century of the church: "Behold how Christians love one another!"

Pray that the salvation of multitudes of the unsaved. God is glorified when the Gospel is proclaimed to the unreached, when a harvest of new believers is reaped here and around the world. This is the great purpose of God, the Great Commission of the church. Intercession for the lost should be a part of every believer's prayer time.

Beware of becoming so absorbed in your own needs and interests that you neglect to pray for others. If self-centered prayer becomes characteristic of your prayer life, your prayers may remain unanswered. Make it a habit to pray more for others than you pray for yourself and your own loved ones. When you follow the order of priority that Jesus taught us, it will take less praying to get your own needs met! "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33). This is His promise.

## *4. Humble yourself before the Lord.*

Humility before God prepares the way for petition for personal needs. Confess your need for Him. Acknowledge His sovereignty. Bow in humble submission before Him; then bow in lowliness of heart as you begin your intercession. There are times when we are driven to our knees by a sense of personal, group, or national sin. In such instances confession of sin and total humbling of the self before God may well precede almost all other aspects of prayer. This is the pattern of Psalm 51 in which David approached God under deep conviction of personal sin.

If you are cherishing sin in your heart, the Lord will not hear your prayer (Ps. 66:18). At Kadesh-Barnea God did not hear the prayers of Israel when they wept tears of self-pity (Deut 1:45). Nor will He honor the prayers of the unrepentant (Job 35:13). Forgiveness for personal sin and reconciliation with Christian brothers and sisters you may have wronged must precede your prayer retreat (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).

When a Spirit-filled believer walking in God's light comes into God's presence, it is appropriate to come with joy, not with head drooped and downcast eyes like the publican (Luke 18:13). Rather, like Jesus, one should lift one's eyes to heaven and first praise the Lord and rejoice in His love. Then, having followed with intercession for kingdom interest, the spirit-filled believer naturally comes to his own personal needs.

With gratitude to God for His goodness and mercy, but with true humility, tell God how far short of His glory you so often come (Rom. 3:23). Then as you look into your own heart in the light of God's holiness, you may recall hasty words you have spoke, unwise steps you have taken, and instances in which you have grieved the Holy Spirit. This is the time to pray, "Forgive me my debts as I forgive my debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

God "...gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time" (1 Peter 5:5-6). In such humility you can then cast all your care on the Lord (v. 7). God will revive the spirit of the lowly and contrite (Isa. 57:15). When God's people humble themselves and confess their sin and the sins of their land, God always forgives and heals (2 Chron. 7:14).

##### 5. *Present your personal petitions to the Lord.*

Because you are God's child, everything which concerns you, is important to God. Nothing is too great or too small to share with your heavenly Father. You pray, not to inform Jesus of what He does not know, but to share your heart's desire, your problems, and your needs. You come to talk it over with your beloved Lord; He will hear you, for He has been waiting for you to present your personal petitions.

As you looked forward to your prayer retreat, you probably made a list of persons and needs. Now is the time to consult the list. As additional items occur to you, jot them down. Present your petitions, one by one. The time to ask Him for all you need is when you are in God's presence (1 John 5:14-15; Phil. 4:19).

Just as Hezekiah, upon receiving a threatening letter from Sennacherib went to the temple and spread out the letter before the Lord (2 Kings 19; 14-20), so you can open your heart and share freely with Him. Then just as the Lord replied to Hezekiah, so He will say to you, "I have heard your prayer."



6. *Plan for some variety or change during your prayer retreat.*

Prayer can be exhausting as you continue hour after hour. You may need to change your posture. Get up and walk around a bit, sing a song quietly, alternate audible prayer with silent prayer, or, in some other way, introduce a change of pace. If you are not fasting, a small snack may refresh you. God is your Father; He understands your physical need. Be free and relaxed in His presence.

7. *Lay hold of God's promises.*

Earlier, when you laid the foundation of your prayer time by first saturating your soul with God's Word and feasting on the Scriptures, God may have impressed on you some special promise. Use it now. Or, as you sense the nearness of God's presence, and as you intercede for others and pray for your own needs, God may bring to your memory other special promises. If not, perhaps He will guide you now to turn again to His Word and will bless to your heart a promise, which you have not noticed for a long time, or it may be one you have used in prayer repeatedly. There are no promises more filled with blessing than the ones you have used again and again. Now He may apply it in a new, fresh way to meet your need.

When Jacob returned to Canaan and spent all night in prayer, he reminded God of His promise (Gen. 32:9). When Moses interceded with God, he reminded God of His Word (Exod. 32:13). The psalmist prayed, "Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope" (Ps. 119:49). Peter urged his hearers at Pentecost to claim what God had promised (Acts 2:39). Like Abraham, we must not waver through unbelief regarding His promise but, strengthened in faith by the promise, give praise and glory to God (Rom. 4:20). Why? Because we are "fully persuaded" that God has power to do what He promises (v. 21).

With your Bible in your hand and your finger on His promise, come boldly, confidently, and joyfully to His throne of grace. "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence" (Eph. 3:12). "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10: 19-22).

8. *Be sure to close your prayer retreat with another time of praise, worship, and thanksgiving.*

When you have come to the conclusion of your prayer time, God will probably give you a blessed peace of heart, a renewed, confident assurance, and a deep joy of soul. Now is the time for the doxology. Now is the time once more to love the Lord, adore Him, and praise Him.

Even if you cannot yet see God's full answer or be sure just how He will work, return to your duties with a singing heart, strengthened in faith. In the words of a classic hymn, "In the Secret of His Presence," written by Miss Ellen Lakshmi Goreh of Allahabad, India:

And whenever you leave the silence  
Of that happy meeting place,  
You will surely bear the image  
Of the Master in your face.

# The Purpose of Extended Times Alone with God - Feiker

**Jim Feiker, former SEND missionary**

The devotional lifestyle of men and women of God in the Scriptures went far beyond daily fellowship with God. They committed themselves to extended times alone with the Father, waiting upon Him in prayer for His will and blessing. Examples can be found in Abraham, (Gen. 18:22), Jacob (Gen 32:22-32), Moses (Ex. 3), Nehemiah (Neh. 1), Daniel (Dan. 9), and even Jesus Himself (Lk. 6:12).

God has always forged and developed His servants in prolonged times set aside for/and with Him. Why is this so essential?

## **For Spiritual Renewal and Revitalization (Ps. 51:10-12)**

How often have our hearts become cool to the Lord in the midst of a demanding ministry? Being in God's presence for an extended time revives our love relationship to Christ, and allows Him to search our hearts for sin we need to confess or encumbrances we need to prune. We need times with Him to strengthen our defenses against a subtle and deceptive enemy, as we fix our eyes on our Sufficient Companion and Commander - Jesus Christ. As the saying goes, we need to come apart, or we will come apart . . . both emotionally and spiritually.

## **For Reflection Time and Meditation (I Tim. 4:15-16)**

Finding time for reflection in a high-paced society is one of our greatest needs. We are constantly bombarded by the world's values. We need time to consider what we are learning, and how to absorb it into a biblical value system. Even secular leadership stresses the need for creative planning and reflection. Every Saturday night my dad would make vegetable soup. It was delicious when first cooked. But when it sat for a couple days, it was scrumptious! Why? During that time the flavors blended, the seasonings were assimilated into every portion of the soup. So it is in our Christian life. Unless we take time to reflect on what God is teaching us through the Word and life experiences, they will not get deeply blended into our spiritual blood systems and internal character. The route between head knowledge and heart conviction is meditation.

## **For Keeping an Eternal Focus**

It is so easy to lose sight of eternity! We become so immersed in our immediate circumstances that we cannot interpret them from an eternal perspective. Like viewing a battlefield from a reconnaissance plane, a day of prayer helps us see the world from God's viewpoint. Increased time in the Scriptures retunes our lives to play in symphonic harmony with God's eternal purposes and will (II Cor. 4:16-18).

## **For God to Clarify or Confirm His Will**

We are prone to be driven beyond the will of God for our lives by our enemy, Satan. He delights in seeing us get over-committed so that we inevitably wear out. God often needs to slow down the erratic pace of our lives so that He may bring our heartbeat in rhythm with His own. I believe it was in Moses' special times of prayer that God intimately revealed Himself, His ways, and His future plans to him. The Israelites only saw the acts of God as they unfolded day-by-day (Ps. 103:7).

### **For Rehearsing The Works of God (PS. 77:11-12)**

The Lord often reminded Israel to recall and review His works for the sake of themselves, their children, and future generations. It was their refusal to maintain this vital growth principle that plagued Israel's courage, faith, praise, and vital relationship to God. Periodically rehearsing the things God has done restores new confidence in God and our love to Him.

### **For Unhurried Intercession for Others**

This is a great time to get caught up on praying for missionaries, non-Christians, our pastors and Christian associates and our government - to name a few. We need to learn to pray with authority and to break down Satan's strongholds around the world.

### **For Increased Preparation and Memorization of Scripture**

Most often we prepare today what we will teach or share tomorrow. We need to be preparing now for the future - to give the Word of God time to brew in our lives so it becomes part of us before we pass it on. I have heard that Howard Hendricks chooses a book of Scripture to study in depth each month. This becomes his reservoir for future messages. Bill Gothard sets aside one day a week for meditation and memorizing a chapter of Scripture.

### **For Setting Personal Objectives . . . Spiritual Growth, Marriage, Family, Ministry**

Where is God working in our life right now? In our family? What would we like to see God do in our life and ministry in the next six months? We all need to take some extended time for personal inventory and to get new direction from the Lord in these vital areas of life.

## **Planning your Time Alone With God - Feiker**

1. Things to bring along: Bible, Notebook/journal/pen, Hymnal, Water/liquid
2. Determine location: Find a place without distractions, where you can read, pray out loud, and walk.
3. Suggested Ingredients:
  - a. *Commit the time to God.*
    - i. Ps. 119:18 - Ask God to reveal Himself and open your eyes to the Scriptures.
    - ii. Acts 24:16 - Ask Him to reveal sin and any unreconciled relationships, or any entanglements that are impeding progress in your walk with Him (Heb. 12:1).
  - b. *Spend time in worship and praise.*
    - i. Pray through Psalms like 1, 42, 63, 111, or a favorite Psalm.
    - ii. Pray through them verse by verse.
  - c. *Journal and rehearse the works of God in your life.*
    - i. What are some ways you have seen God in your life? How have you seen His fingerprints in your life in the last three or four years (personal relationship to Him, future, parents, marriage, or children)?
    - ii. List them and describe what God did. Then praise Him for His faithfulness.
  - d. *Personal Inventory - Confession.* Acts 24:16
    - i. Is my conscience clear before God and people?

- ii. Is there anyone God is bringing to my attention with whom I need to seek reconciliation?
- iii. In what areas of my life could I be very vulnerable as I anticipate cross-cultural ministry?
- e. *Rehearse God's calling in your life to world missions.* What are some motivating verses or promises that God has given you over the years?
- f. *Plan for spiritual applications*
  - i. Some lessons/principles I have learned at MOP in my walk with God are. . . What are some things God has been saying to me about my relationship with Him, or future directions? Review your journaling.
  - ii. My/our life purpose statement is . . . List some of the ingredients that should or does make up this statement.
  - iii. Some specific spiritual growth objectives in my life in the next six months are . . .
  - iv. My prayer to God today about my relationship with Him is . . . Include your heart passion to know God, your desire to finish strong in life and ministry, your commitment to the Scripture and use it in ministry as the final authority.

## **The Practice of Extended Times with God - Feiker**

Divide The Time With God Into Four Parts.

1. Wait on the Lord in reading Scripture, in confession, and in worship.
  - a. *In the Scriptures* . . . you may want to read a large portion of Scripture or just review verses you have previously underlined. Read out loud.
  - b. *In Confession and Cleansing* . . . Ask God to search your heart for areas in your life that are blocking real fellowship with Him. As the Holy Spirit reveals sin, confess it. This is not to be a time of morbid introspection, digging up past garbage that has already been dealt with, but a time of forgiveness and cleansing. If God reveals sin against a brother, write it down and take care of it when you return.
  - c. *In Worship* . . . Ps. 103, 111, 145 are great portions to pray over in worship. Enjoy the Lord's presence unhurriedly.
2. Reflect and Meditate.
  - a. *On the Works of God* . . . Journal the ways you have seen God work, answers to prayer, vital encounters with God, things you are thankful to God for (from as far back as your conversion). Review these faith-builders each time you spend extended times and add fresh accounts.
  - b. *On Your Calling to Ministry* . . . Review often why you know God has called you to your particular life ministry. This gives renewed conviction that He will use you and enable you to do what He has called you to do.

- c. *On the Promises of God and Life-motivating Verses* . . . What are some promises God has sustained over the years? What are some life verses that have motivated you and given you direction? Periodically review them on days alone with God.
  - d. *In What God Is Teaching You in His Word* . . . Journal your daily encounters with God, then use these extended times alone to review what He has been teaching you.
3. Intercede for yourself, your family, and for others.
  4. Prepare and plan, setting new objectives for life and ministry for the next six months.

Set extended time alone with God one or two months in advance. Expect something will always come up to keep you from this time. The enemy knows the life-changing impact of this time. You must make time, you will never find it.

Choose a place free from distractions, where you can walk and pray aloud. It needs to be away from your home and office. Christian retreat centers usually allow you to spend time away like this, or if necessary, go to a motel. You need to get away from your present environment to be able to see objectively.

Prepare for the Time Alone the Day Before. Bring a bag lunch . . . Determine where you will read . . . What challenging book to bring along . . . A notebook to journal thoughts . . . An extra pen . . . A hymnal for worship, etc.

Times alone with God must be tailored to your personality and style. These times will be challenging to maintain, but will pay great dividends in your life and ministry.

*“Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” Lk. 5:15, 16*

## **A plan for a monthly personal retreat day – Cordeiro**

1. Part 1 – A short physical workout and an extended time in the Word and prayer (2 hours)
2. Part 2 – Calendar organization - review my calendar to see if I have been faithful to my priorities and plan for future. (1 hour)
3. Part 3 – plan upcoming speaking opportunities. Listen to what God is saying to the church. (2 hours)
4. Part 4 – Honestly evaluate my life. Spend time grading myself on every component of my life – faith life, marriage, family, office, computer, ministry, financial, social, attitudinal, writing, speaking, physical (2 hours)
5. Part 5 – message preparation & reading (2 hours)
6. Part 6 – Dream. Write down goals I dream about in the next five years. (1 hour)

From Leading on Empty: Refilling your Tank and Renewing Your Passion by Pastor Wayne Cordeiro

# **My plan for my Day Alone with God**

My expectations for this day (what I am waiting on God for):

My location:

What I want to bring along with me:

My schedule:

What God showed me during this day:

What I learned about myself:

Goals I have set as a result of this day:

# Tools for Personal Evaluation

## Worksheet on Spiritual Vitality

Ken Williams

This worksheet is designed to help you improve your strategy for maintaining a vital, growing relationship with the Lord. Prayerfully consider and answer each question. Write your responses on a separate sheet.

### Positive Factors

1. Internal Factors. List some of your strengths and personal characteristics that enhance your ability to walk effectively with the Lord. See Romans 12:3. In what ways can you use one or two of these more effectively?
2. External Factors. List the factors in your situation that help you. In what ways can you use one or two of these more effectively?
3. Spiritual Resources. What spiritual resources are you now using to help you? Which resources would you like to begin using more?
4. Application. Write one or two goals on how you will use these positive factors to help you maintain spiritual vitality. Specifically state what you plan to do and when.

### Hindering Factors

1. Internal Factors. List weaknesses or other personal characteristics that hinder your spiritual vitality.
2. External Factors. List factors in your situation that hinder your spiritual vitality.
3. Application. Choose one or two factors, and describe what you can begin doing today to overcome them. What will you do, and when will you begin?

### Your Prayer Life

Kinds of prayer include praise, thanksgiving, casting your burdens on Him, confession, petition (for self), intercession (for others), and sharing your joys with Him. Consider your prayer life using the following questions.

1. Private Prayer. What three words best describe your private prayer life? In what kinds of prayer are you strong? In what kinds of prayer are you weak?  
  
How would you describe your personal balance between formal and informal prayer? Formal prayer means taking time just to pray. Informal prayer means conversing with the Lord as you engage in other activities.
2. Prayer With Family or Partner. What three words would you use to describe this? What kinds of prayer do you concentrate on most with them? What would you like to do differently in this area? Ask them what they would like to do differently with you.

3. Prayer With Other People. Other than family, with whom do you pray with regularly or occasionally? Would you like to begin praying regularly or more often with someone? Who?
4. Application. Write one or two goals on what you will begin doing differently in your prayer life. What do you plan to do, and when?

### **Time in The Word**

Ways of relating to the Word include hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, meditating, singing, and sharing with others.

1. Personal Time in the Word. What three words would you use to describe your personal time in the Word? In what ways of relating to the Word do you consider yourself strong? In what ways do you consider yourself weak? In what ways of relating to the Word would you like to grow?
2. Time With Family or Friends. What three words would you use to describe your time in the Word with them? What ways of relating to the Word do you do most with them? What ways do you do least with them? What would you like to do differently? Ask them what they would like to do differently.
3. Application. Write one or two goals on what you will begin doing differently in how you relate to the Word personally, or with others. What will you do and when?

### **Other Issues**

You may want to identify and work on other issues in your spiritual vitality. If so, here are some steps to take.

1. Identify Issues. List any other issues that you would like to work on in the immediate future. These might include sharing your faith, obedience, ministering to others, developing a relationship of mutual accountability, growing in the fruit of the Spirit.
2. Assessment. What are you doing now in this area? Ask a loved one or friend how they see you in this area. What would you like to do differently? What resources can you apply to grow in it?
3. Application. Write one goal describing what you will begin doing differently in this area.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Growth often requires involvement with others in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16, Hebrews 10:24,25). Share your goals with a loved one and/or close friend, and invite them to share with you. Become accountable to them for your growth. Ask them to pray for you in each area, and set times to share how you're doing. Ask for feedback as you go along. Also, you will probably be less discouraged if you pick only one or two issues to work on. Ask the Lord to show you the areas He would like you to work on.

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## Spiritual Check List

1. Can I be constructively criticized and not resent the criticism?
2. Can I accept that my talents and gifts may be less noticed than gifts in some other Christians, even if my gifts are useful to God?
3. What is the overriding ambition of my life?
4. How much have I brought God into my thinking, planning, and doing this week?
5. Is my love of God's Word growing cold?
6. How generously do I give? Do I want to give the least I can, or the most?
7. Am I an intercessor? Do I need to organize my prayer life so that I can get involved in a real way in different aspects of God's work through my prayers?
8. How can I describe my lifestyle? Is it focused on Christ, or is it hardly distinguishable from the lifestyle of a non-Christian?
9. Is my language clean? Are my relationships pure?
10. Am I quick to see the wrongs of others, but slow to see my own?
11. Do I make allowances or excuses for my own failings, but not for those of others?
12. Am I a peacemaker? Am I quick to say, "I'm sorry"?
13. Am I tuned in to God's purpose for my life? How well has that purpose been implemented this past month?
14. Do I care about people – in my home, in my place of work, in my neighborhood?
15. Do I often express my thanks to God, to other people?
16. Am I prepared to speak up for Christ anywhere, or am I sometimes ashamed or reluctant to be known as a Christian?
17. Did I really worship God last Sunday – or did I just go through the form of a worship service?
18. Have people looked for Christ in me and been disappointed? How much does the love of God flow through me to others?
19. Am I scrupulously honest? Can people rely completely on my word?
20. Lord, how do You see my life? "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10.

## **A Spiritual Life Inventory for Missionaries**

1. What has been the role of Scripture in your personal spiritual life in the last 12 months?
2. How satisfied are you with your prayer life?
3. Through what other means (than the two mentioned above) has your faith been nurtured during the last six months?
4. Who has been a significant person that has nurtured your spiritual life in the last 12 months and how have they had this influence?
5. How would you rate your personal struggle against sin?
6. How satisfied are you with your personal spiritual growth during the last 12 months?
7. What brings the greatest discouragement in your spiritual life?
8. What do you foresee as the greatest spiritual battle when you serve on the mission field, and what means of grace do you feel will cause you to have victory in this battle?

# Reflect & refocus

A series of questions developed by SEND U to help us regain focus on life and ministry. We recommend that you use it on a quarterly basis (once every 3 months).

## Review

1. Your personal mission statement - Are you living in alignment with what you say is most important to you?
2. Your job description - How well are you doing what you have been assigned to do?
3. Your goals for the year - What progress have you made?
4. Your individual growth plan for the year

## Reflect

1. What were the accomplishments and achievement of the last quarter?
2. What issues remain unresolved?
3. What have you learned and how have you grown in the past quarter?
4. As you consider your responsibilities of engaging in personal ministry, leading your family, maintaining your health and nurturing your personal relationship with God, what areas have been neglected during this past quarter?

## Refocus

1. What opportunities do you have in this quarter to make significant contribution to the kingdom of God?
2. In light of the above opportunities, what should be your highest priority or priorities in this next quarter?

## Resources

1. What adjustments do you need to make to your life and schedule to ensure that you will be able to stay healthy, joyful and spiritually vibrant in this coming quarter?
2. What will you plan to do to facilitate your own learning and growth in this next quarter?
3. What (or whose help) do you need to accomplish your priorities this next quarter?