

Spiritual Tip

Quiet Time with God: It's Simple, Really

By Rick Warren

Having a quiet time is like many other activities you might do in life — in at least one respect. To be successful, it helps to have a plan.

The Bible says, *“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty”* (Proverbs 21:5 ESV).

If you've never had a quiet time before, you may not have a good, simple plan for doing one. Simplicity is important with any plan you develop. If you make it complicated, you're more likely to get off track. All you really need for an effective quiet time is a Bible, notebook, and maybe a hymn or songbook.

So what does a daily quiet time look like?

First, be quiet before the Lord. The Bible calls it waiting on God. You start by simply sitting down and shutting up. As you do this, you'll find yourself revving your engine down and calming yourself.

Second, pray briefly. Start off with a short opening prayer. Ask God to open your mind and guide you. Ask him to cleanse your mind.

Read a portion of Scripture slowly. This is where your conversation with God begins. He starts speaking to you through his Word, and then you speak back to him through prayer. Read the Bible slowly. Don't try to read too quickly or too much. The more slowly you read Scripture, the more you're forced to think about what you're reading.

Meditate on the Word. Spend some time chewing on what God is saying. Chew on the Word like cows chew on cud. Ponder and wrestle with it in your mind. There are lots of great methods for meditating on the Word. You can find specific ideas on how to meditate on the Bible in my book *“Rick Warren's Bible Study Methods.”*

Write down what you discover. When God speaks to you through his Word, care enough about what he is saying to write it down. Writing enables us to remember what God has said to us and record our discoveries.

Pray again. Be quiet. Ask God to show you his Word. Talk to God about what he has said to you. Tell him what you're thinking about what he is saying. Talk to him about anything else that's on your mind.

There's not just one way to have a quiet time, but following a plan similar to this can get you started on a rewarding devotional journey.

Marriage Tip

Consumerism Infecting Marriages

By Mark Gungor

I recently spoke about living in a “throwaway” world and suggested that if we are not careful, we can end up thinking that way about our marriages too. We live in a culture that is very consumer based and the consumerist mind-set runs deep. Many people build their identities around the stuff they have...or it may be more apt to say, by what has them.

If I run to the store to buy some simple dish soap, I can buy the inexpensive brand that sports the name “Dish Soap” on the front of the bottle. But just looking at the label Dish Soap makes me feel flat, empty, nondescript. So for some reason, I can't settle for that. As a consumer, what I buy defines who I am, and I have no idea who I am if I buy something labeled “Dish Soap.” I need something more.

Then I see it! Right next to the unsophisticated Dish Soap is a product called “Dawn.” My heart lights up—now we're talking. Who wants to wash their dishes with Dish Soap when you can wash them with morning-fresh, bright sunshine? Presumably with Dawn, a person can do the dishes and dispel the darkness in life at the same time.

But just before I make my all-important decision, I look to the other side of the imagination-less, unfulfilling, chore-oriented Dish Soap. Alas, there is yet another amazing product possibility: “Joy.” Wow. Who would have thought that a person could experience joy while doing the dishes? And couldn't all of us use just a little more joy? The Joy has it, hands-down. So what if it costs a little more, I muse. After all, aren't I worth it?

Somehow I feel a bit more alive holding that bottle of Joy. I don't know how, but that little vessel of pleasure makes me feel skinnier and smarter, and I'm sure my wife, Debbie, will praise me when I return home—after all, I am bringing new joy into our home! Surely she will take one look at that bottle of Joy and gleefully respond, “Joy? O what waves of glory fill my soul! You went out for mere dish soap, but you, with your keen insight, have returned not with just soap, but with Joy!”

In reality, Debbie isn't nearly as controlled by consumerist thought as I am. She would actually say something more like, “Why didn't you get the cheaper generic one? It does the dishes as well as anything else.

Whether we realize it or not, this consumerist expectation gets attached to just about everything we get involved in, including marriage. When you view marriage as a product or commodity, you are trying to make it define you in some way. You are saying, “I expect marriage to make me look better, to make me feel better, to make me happier, right now.” It ends up centering marriage on me.

The problem is, marriage is not a commodity, it is a relationship. And relationships often experience difficulty and demand sacrifice. At times a marriage may feel more like a liability than anything else.

And if you believe marriage is only about making you happy, whenever there are more cons than pros, your mind will scream, “Abandon ship!”

A consumerist mind-set can't work through a troubled marriage. It isn't governed by commitments or by values; what's in it for me rules the day. If the what do I get out of it isn't conspicuous, a person with this mind-set doesn't want anything more to do with the marriage. It ceases to be important whenever it no longer “does it” for them. And they feel totally justified in cashing out.

Indeed, the commodity mindset is disastrous when applied to marriage. God never designed the institution from a consumer standpoint where we are free to leave when we aren't getting our money's worth. Marriage is a lifetime commitment with no return policy and no refunds.

Parenting Tip

Trustworthiness

From www.parenting.org/article/trustworthiness

Trust is very important to teenagers, and trustworthiness is necessary for meaningful, long-lasting relationships. There are two components of trust. The first is to trust, or to have confidence that others will do the right thing. The second is to be trustworthy, or to demonstrate through our words and actions that others can trust us.

It is our job as parents to teach our children the value of trust and the advantages that stem from trusting and being trusted. Being trustworthy fosters strong and lasting relationships. Being untrustworthy destroys relationships. Parents must show teens it feels good to be trusted. They also must show teens it feels bad to not be trusted.

Parents should teach teens that four specific qualities – **integrity, honesty, reliability and loyalty** – create trust.

Integrity: Integrity is moral wholeness, which is demonstrated by consistency of thoughts, words and deeds (“walking the walk”). Parents need to prepare teens for situations in which they will be pressured to abandon their beliefs in order to

please themselves or their peers. Having integrity means maintaining our highest values even when faced with criticism or embarrassment. It is the willingness to do the right thing even when it costs more than you want to pay.

A second component of integrity is having the moral courage to accept failure or defeat without losing hope. Disappointment is part of life. How we handle it says a lot about our integrity.

Honesty: Honesty involves what we say and what we do. Three aspects of honest communication are truthfulness, sincerity and candor.

Truthfulness: Honest people are truthful. Intent is important in establishing truth. Willfully misrepresenting the facts is untruthful. Being wrong about the facts is not; that’s a mistake. Furthermore, not all lies are unethical. An example would be “white lies” told in order to spare someone’s feelings.

But parents should stress that all forms of dishonesty can damage trust. Some well-intentioned lies can deprive people of the important information they need to see their world more clearly. Untruthfulness has a ripple effect. When lies break trust, the person being lied to may

wonder what other lies have been told.

Sincerity: Sincerity is the genuineness of purpose that prevents all acts of deception (i.e., half-truths, deliberate omissions). Parents should teach teens that it is as wrong to deceive as it is to outright lie.

Candor: Candor is the most advanced aspect of honesty and involves the obligation to volunteer needed information. Teens need to know that they are obligated to reveal things that those who trust them ought to know or would want to know for their own good.

Reliability: Trustworthy people keep their word, honor their commitments, pay their debts and return what they borrow. Parents need to help teens learn how to decide whether they can keep a promise before they make one.

Parents, in turn, must be clear in what they promise their teens. Teens often translate statements of possibility as promises. They hear what they want to hear. Clearly state what you will or will not do, and make certain you and your teen hear and understand the same message. Ask your teen to repeat what he or she heard you say. If he or she misunderstands or misinterprets what you said, immediately restate your position.

Loyalty: Loyalty is standing with and behind someone in need. Loyal friends share both triumphs and trauma, and offer honest, constructive feedback delivered in a kind and tactful manner. Parents need to teach teens to choose their loyalties carefully; teens should support their friends without compromising their integrity and reputation.

Parents can reinforce trustworthiness by modeling it and clearly conveying their expectations regarding trustworthy behavior. If your teen falters, it is your job to give an appropriate consequence. But you should also praise your teen for using trustworthy behaviors. Every day provides opportunities to reinforce your child’s merits of trustworthiness.

Compliments of the District 1
Marriage and Family Ministry,
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