

4 Myths of Prayer

Quiet time. Being raised in a Christian home, I remember hearing that term since I was a little girl. I loved how it sounded, like a special invitation to spend time with Jesus—just the two of us.

Now and then, if I woke up early, I'd hear my dad praying as I made my way to the bathroom. Peeking through his bedroom door, I'd see him kneeling beside his bed having his devotions. Although I didn't fully understand what he was doing, I liked it, especially when I heard him call out my name to the Lord.

Unfortunately, as I grew up, the invitation I'd sensed as a little girl grew into a religious duty—something I had to do in order to be a good Christian. Without realizing it, a list of requirements and expectations grew up around the idea of a daily time with the Lord.

But instead of drawing me closer to Jesus, the self-imposed rules actually stood in the way—as they always do. It isn't our work-based Christianity that allows us to come to God. It's the work Jesus did on the cross (Heb. 4:16).

Be Still My Soul

What's holding you back from having a regular quiet time? Perhaps the very term feels loaded with shoulds and oughts. It's another thing to add to the endless checklist of your life, so maybe later, you think, when life slows down.

I'd like to share some good news. God never intended your relationship with Him to be a duty; instead, He wants it to be a delight. We need to peel away the myths and unrealistic expectations of our flesh that the enemy uses to keep us from experiencing the joy of knowing Jesus and being known by Him.

Myth Buster No. 1: A quiet time doesn't have to be long. To be

honest, this idea tripped me up for most of my young adult life in Christ. I was fairly certain that a quiet time should involve an hour in prayer, an hour in Bible study and then at least another hour in door-to-door witnessing. (OK, I may be exaggerating but not by much!)

But my surplus of good intentions constantly ran into my lack of discipline. I'd start out with strong resolve (especially each Jan. 1), but it wouldn't be long before I'd throw my hands up in despair and decide to try again next year. Being a frustrated perfectionist, if I couldn't do it "all," I'd default to nothing.

Oh, I still loved Jesus. I still talked with Him and He with me. But a dedicated quiet time each day? It just didn't seem possible. Thankfully, the Lord kept reassuring me of His love and wooing me by His Spirit.

"It isn't the amount of time you spend that matters," He'd whisper gently. "It's the fact that you take the time to invite me into your life."

Start small, but begin. Those simple words helped me begin to carve out the time for devotions and is advice I still turn to today because there are times I forget to do devotions. Rather than beating myself up for my lapse, I simply run to Jesus and begin again.

Pastor Greg Laurie sees spiritual hunger as the opposite of natural hunger.

"When you're hungry in the natural, you eat and are satisfied," he says. "But with spiritual hunger, it isn't until you begin eating that you discover how hungry you really are!"

So here's what I suggest for those of you who have never had a daily quiet time. Rather than setting yourself up to fail, start small, but begin. Set aside five minutes to open your

Bible and meditate on a short portion of Scripture. Talk to God about it. Present your needs to Him and invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you throughout the day.

Guess what? You've just had a quiet time! Now, tomorrow, do it again. As your spiritual appetite increases, you'll find yourself setting aside 10 minutes, then 20, and that time will continue to grow.

When you "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8), you'll want more and more time with Jesus—which is wonderful because He longs for time with you.

Still Your Heart in Chaos

Many women wonder how to find time in the middle of diapers and carpools, not to mention full-time careers. "How can I have a quiet time?" a friend asked me not long ago. "There's nothing quiet about my life!"

Don't let the noise of life be a hindrance. Instead of escaping busyness and responsibilities, Jesus wants to join you there.

Myth Buster No. 2: A quiet time doesn't necessarily have to be quiet. Though my goal is to have a daily sit-down time with the Lord, I'm learning there are creative ways we can connect with the Lord all day long. Consider these options when you can't take a longer, dedicated quiet time:

- Turn on worship music as you clean—sing, pray in the Spirit and practice memory verses. "Do everything ... as to the Lord" (Col. 3:23, NKJV).
- Listen to the Bible while driving. There are great apps available.
- Pray while you exercise. Expand your faith muscle!
- Take God out for coffee. Do your Bible study at a restaurant or coffee shop.
- Go for a walk with Jesus. Pray for people and praise God

for the beauty around you.

- Have a quiet time with your kids. Teach them how to do it.

Don't be afraid to be creative in the way you meet with God. Welcome Him into the ordinary moments, and the mundane will become holy. Give the Holy Spirit permission to interrupt, then go where He leads. Do life with Jesus—it just doesn't get better than that!

Still in the Morning—Still at Night

Another self-imposed expectation I had to get rid of before I could move forward in my walk with the Lord was the idea that truly godly people met Jesus early in the day.

Myth Buster No. 3: A quiet time doesn't have to be first thing in the morning. I've always had a strong aversion to getting up when it's dark. I admire women who get up at 4 a.m., spend an hour in the Word, then an hour exercising before fixing breakfast for their children (all the while weaving flax, selling land and providing for handmaids like the Proverbs 31 woman evidently did!).

It was a wonderful relief to discover that Jesus was more than willing to adjust His schedule in order to meet—no matter the time of day or night. So you're free to find a time of day that works best for you. If one time no longer works well with my schedule, I'm not afraid to try another. I don't want to miss the invitation. I need time with Jesus.

"You're my place of quiet retreat," David writes in Psalm 119:114 (MSG). "I wait for your Word to renew me."

Still and Settled

Whether you're new to the idea of a quiet time or have had regular devotions for years, remember this: A quiet time isn't about performing for God. It's about being with God. And oh,

how we need it!

Throughout the Psalms, a little word recurs frequently—"Selah." Seventy-one times this word serves as a break, a pause. It means stop and think. Weigh what you've read.

There's no specific length of time attached to the pause. Instead, it seems left up to the individual. Selah. It's a call to rest and reflect, to be still and breathe deeply, to settle into the moment and remain a while.

This Selah thought seems to be at the heart of quiet time with the Lord.

"Stop doing, Joanna," I hear Him whisper. "Sit at my feet. Lay aside your busyness and just belong to Me. I want to be your place of quiet retreat."

What a beautiful invitation! It's everything I've longed for, everything I need.

Joanna Weaver is a popular speaker and the best-selling author of *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*, *Having a Mary Spirit* and *Lazarus Awakening*. She and her husband, Pastor John Weaver, and family make their home in Hamilton, Montana. Visit her blog, [www.joannaweaver.com](#), for more quiet time tips and helps.