

SAMPLE JOURNAL

October 15, 2020 – Monday

Reading Plan

- Matthew 1-28 – *read 2-3 chapters per day*
- Psalm 1-10 – *read 1 Psalm per day*

YESTERDAY

Highs/Lows

Strong emotions

People

Yesterday's Journal

WORD

What is God like?

What does God care about?

What stands out to me today?

What can I do today?

PRAYER

Devotional Bible Reading Plan

About this Plan

This plan is designed to guide daily Bible reading so you can hear the Spirit's leading and apply it to your life that day. It's built around repetition in the Gospels, Psalms and Wisdom books, with most other books read once during the year. It also assumes that the best way to read most books of the Bible is in large chunks at a time.

How to read daily

- Start at the beginning of a month. Whatever month you start is "month 1"
- Each day, read from all three groupings
- Reading 1 – All of the books in this grouping are best read in big chunks. It's recommended to read at least 2-3 chapters per day, but feel free to read more. "Pace" denotes chapters you would need to read per day to complete these readings in a 30-day month.
- Reading 2 – Read and pray through one chapter per day; For Psalm 119, read one section per day
- Reading 3 – Read one chapter per day except Job, which requires 1.3

| Month | Reading 1 | Reading 2 | Reading 3 |
|-------|--|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | The Gospel of Matthew The Gospel of Mark The Gospel of Luke <i>Pace: 2.3</i> | Psalms 1-30 | Proverbs |
| 2 | Genesis Exodus 1-20 <i>Pace: 2.3</i> | Psalms 31-60 | Proverbs |
| 3 | Exodus 21-40 Leviticus 1:1-6:7, 8-11, 16-23 Numbers <i>Pace: 2.4</i> | Psalms 61-90 | Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon |
| 4 | Deuteronomy The Gospel of John Acts 1, 2, 3 John <i>Pace: 3.0</i> | Psalms 91-118 | Proverbs |
| 5 | Joshua Judges Ruth The Gospel of Matthew <i>Pace: 2.5</i> | Psalm 119 | Job |
| 6 | Romans 1 & 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians <i>Pace: 2.0</i> | Psalm 120-150 | Proverbs |
| 7 | 1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings (<i>Y2: 1 & 2 Chron</i>) The Gospel of Mark <i>Pace: 2.1</i> | Psalm 1-30 | Proverbs |

| | | | |
|----|---|----------------|---------------------------------|
| 8 | Colossians 1 & 2 Thessalonians 1 & 2 Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews James 1 & 2 Peter <i>Pace: 1.8</i> | Psalms 31-60 | Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon |
| 9 | Ezra Nehemiah Esther Isaiah 1-39 <i>Pace: 2.4</i> | Psalms 61-90 | Proverbs |
| 10 | Isaiah 40-66 Revelation The Gospel of John <i>Pace: 2.3</i> | Psalms 91-118 | Proverbs |
| 11 | Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel <i>Pace: 3.5</i> | Psalms 119 | Job |
| 12 | Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi The Gospel of Luke <i>Pace 3.4</i> | Psalms 120-150 | Proverbs |

Passages for Intercession

- John 17:11-19 - perseverance in faith, sanctification
- Acts 4:23-32 - boldness, outpouring of Holy Spirit
- Romans 10:12-15 - messengers to unbelievers, new faith
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-7 - love
- 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 - affliction, suffering
- Ephesians 1:15-23 - wisdom, revelation, direction, knowledge of Christ
- Philippians 1:8-11 - love, discernment
- Philippians 4:4-7 - joy, peace

The Gain of Feelings



| Feeling | Benefit | Impairment |
|----------------|---|------------------------------|
| Hurt | Names woundedness and begins healing. | Resentment |
| Sadness | Allows us to value and honor what is present and missed. | Self-pity |
| Loneliness | Allows us to ask for help and reach out for relationship. | Apathy |
| Fear | Helps us practice and prepare for accomplishment. | Anxiety/Rage |
| Anger | Helps us tell the truth, dares to hope and arouses willingness in desire. | Depression/ Perfectionism |
| Shame | Awakens us to humility. | Toxic Shame/ Pride/Rage |
| Guilt | Gives us freedom to seek forgiveness. | Pride/ Toxic Shame |
| Gladness | Reveals the fullness and richness of life. | Happiness/ Entertainment |

Quiet Time

Wisdom from Bill Smith

All quotes are from "Quiet Time: A Guide to Daily Renewal" by Bill Smith

Quiet Time and Homemade Bread

To begin, an analogy might help. We all like homemade bread. Recently some friends came to our lake house to spend the weekend and brought two loaves. What a surprise! It brought back memories of a time when I baked my own homemade bread on Saturday mornings. It was relaxing (you can really work off some tension pounding dough!), the aroma was great, and friends enjoyed the results.

A quiet time is like homemade bread:

- Directions are provided. This book is one "recipe" for quiet time.
- Baking bread invites innovation. This is a starter; you can build on your own experience. There is no right way to do it, just different ways.
- The results are satisfying to the baker and to those around. Quiet time will become the highlight of your day, and others will recognize the difference in your attitude and personality!

Why homemade bread? Breads of all kinds can be bought ready-made at the supermarket. Even fresh baked bread is available. But homemade bread is best by far. No one will argue that. It smells better and tastes better.

You can also buy "prebaked" guides or quiet time books. Some are exceptionally good. But all are second-hand, passing on someone else's experience. This book tells you how to have *your own* personal quiet time *directly from God's Word* itself and feel good about the results.

The Appeal of a Quiet Time

A quiet time is a daily period set aside from the world's demands, and our own opinions, to seek refreshment and strength in direct communion with God. It's a time of "God and me" in private.

What is the goal of quiet time? The goal is TO KNOW GOD. It's that simple, and that profound.

Quiet Time Ingredient One: Time

A regular, habitual time every day needs to be devoted to quiet time. We eat at regular times, and we sleep at regular times. We can also meet God quietly and personally at a regular time daily.

When? Any time will do, but many find early mornings best. Our minds are more alert, we haven't been subjected to the pressures of the day, and we are fresh for the day's most important meeting – with our Creator.

Some find it almost impossible to have quiet time in the early hours. Other times will do just fine. Throughout history, however, many have found the first part of the day ideal for quiet time.

Be Careful About Expectations

There are legitimate expectations when you start a quiet time, but also some things you should *not* expect. Unreasonable expectations can undermine any new undertaking. Knowing what to expect reinforces our resolve. What should you expect?

Do not expect a mountaintop experience every time. If you have one, fine. But feelings are deceiving. We live by faith, not feelings. It's true that faith produces feelings, but it is a mistake to depend on or always expect feelings as a payoff.

Do not expect every day to be equal in satisfaction, insight, vitality, or meaning. Each quiet time is fresh and produces its own special lessons and blessings. That's part of the appeal. You'll have so-so days, and also absolutely mind-blowing days. Just like eating, every meal is not a gourmet spread. The ordinary meals are what sustain us and make the gourmet meals recognizable.

Do not expect perfection of yourself in execution of a quiet time. You'll oversleep or miss a day, but don't let that throw you. The object is fellowship with Christ, not a religious ritual. Simply get back with him and continue the next day. Again, like a missed meal, you will find that hunger will drive you to fellowship with him as your spiritual appetite is sharpened and developed.

Expect gradual, persistent growth. We thrive physically on regular, balanced meals. The binges, while stimulating in the short run, leave us feeling bloated and less effective afterward. Spiritually, the most meaningful personal growth is gradual, consistent, progressive. A balanced quiet time diet is likewise very important...

Expect an increasingly satisfying personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Amplified Bible version of Philippians 3:10 is worth repeating: "For my determined purpose is that I may know him – that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding (the wonders of his person) more strongly and clearly." That's the goal of a quiet time and should be our expectation!

Time

"How long?" is a frequently asked question. The question is necessary because we lead such scheduled lives. But if allowed, "How long?" can subtly undermine the whole purpose of quiet time. An implied "How long do I have to read the Bible and pray to say I've had quiet time?" can creep into our thinking. That attitude is a killer; there are no medals handed out on earth or elsewhere for quiet times. The payoff is a deepening relationship with the living God through his Son, Jesus Christ.

If we had a meeting scheduled with the President of the United States, would we ask, "How long?" Here in Arkansas, the wealthiest man in the United States is down the road. If presented the opportunity, do you think a businessman would ask, "How long do I have to spend meeting with him?" Time with the eternal God is far more desirable in comparison, and time thus spent is invaluable.

The answer to "How long?" has to be worked out by each individual. Daily demands and schedules will dictate part of the answer. If scheduling is critical, start with a small amount of time (say, ten minutes a day) and see what develops.

"What if the Bible confuses me?"

You're not alone. Questions arise daily from my lack of understanding. Adopt the attitude that you will pick up truths and directions that you do understand and can act on, and leave the matters that are beyond your understanding for future discovery. After all, we are disciples, which means learners. We will remain disciples and never will learn it all. God is larger than the combined ability of all mankind to comprehend. So, be like a treasure hunter. Don't get hung up on academic or intellectual questions; rather, be on the lookout for your own spiritual treasures that you can discover and use.

The desire to understand and know God's word better will be a natural outgrowth of quiet time. Deeper study can be aided by various helpful sources...However, Bible study on a more academic or informational basis should be done outside the quiet time. During quiet time, keep the focus on being open to the Holy Spirit's prodding and teaching in practical, life-changing ways.

Obedience: The Result That Counts

How does God speak so that we know our orders? This is a delicate area, one that must be learned. That is why keeping the Word of God central to quiet time is important. Our experiences should coincide with God's Word. Also, subjecting impressions of God's leadership to the test of time can be important. In all honesty, however, we are probably overly cautious and sometimes miss the blessing of obedience through fear of how others might react.

Back to the question: How does God speak? One of the earliest and clearest indications is from the period right after the Ten Commandments were given to Israel and the tabernacle was about to be built from the materials donated by the people. God told Moses: "You are to receive the offerings for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give" (Exodus 25:2b).

Here and in other places, the Word indicates that God speaks to us through our hearts, not our ears. Our hearts are the center of our beings, and they are equipped to pick up God's leadings. These leadings are called "promptings" in the Word.

It has been my experience that I am more spiritually attuned, more in line with God's way of looking at things (because of time in his Word), and more sensitive to his concerns during quiet time. The promptings of my heart are most likely from him. They usually

concern someone who needs prayer or might be hurting and needs support. The prompting might concern a particular good work or needed word. Obedience may mean that you invest time with a personal friend, or that you serve Christ ministering to the sick or the poor. It seems that when God wants something done through one of his children, he puts a strong desire in their heart to do it. These desires should be prayed about and followed! Then, and only then, will we discover the active real-life power and presence of Jesus Christ.

Last...Be Persistent

Returning to the analogy of eating regularly, today's quiet time will not carry you for a week or a month. A daily secluded quiet time is necessary for spiritual health, just as regular meals are necessary for maintenance of physical health.

Your quiet time experience will vary; it will have its ups and downs, just like anything. But the overall direction will definitely be up if you start, stay with it, and include all the critical ingredients. Persistence pays.

Daily Life with God

Recommended Resources

Books

***Quiet Time: A Guide to Daily Renewal* by Bill Smith** – Our format is based on Bill's guide. The book is full of practical wisdom and guidance and answers frequently asked questions. Though out-of-print, lightly used copies are usually available for a few dollars. [[Amazon](#)] [[Thrift Books](#)]

***The Voice of the Heart: A Call to Full Living* by Chip Dodd** – Explains the 8 foundational feelings and how they are both full of potential benefits and impairments. It's helpful to be familiar with these feelings for your daily "Yesterday" check-in. [[Amazon](#)]

Bibles

NIV Study Bible – Bible with simple notes to explain background and context; I prefer the NIV translation for reading longer sections of narrative, especially in the Old Testament. [[Amazon](#)]

ESV Study Bible – Even more notes and background studies, which means an even thicker book; I prefer this translation for study and preaching. [[Amazon](#)]

Apps and Websites

Bible Project – Short videos that explain each book of the Bible, key characters, and important concepts. Developed by a reputable Bible scholar. Available as a [website](#) and phone apps.

Spark Bible – Bible reading app that provides video teaching from reputable teachers for key passages and verses. Developed by Fellowship Denver's own Stephen Blankenship. [[Website](#)] [[Apple App Store](#)]

Dwell – Listen to Scripture on your phone. [[Apple](#)] [[Google Play](#)]

Notebooks

Rhodia 6" x 8.25" staple-bound notebook – The perfect quiet time journal, available in orange and black. [[Amazon](#)] [[Official Site](#)]