



SPENDING TIME ALONE WITH GOD



From the Moving Toward Maturity Series



Barry St. Clair



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The usage of the pronouns "his/he/him" has been used throughout this book for the sake of continuity and uniformity. The reader should assume these references refer to both male and female.

GREAT STUFF IN THE BOOK

From the Author	7
Purpose	9
Uses for This Book	10
Practical Hints	11
If You're in a Discipleship Group	12
Personal Commitment	13
1 GET TO KNOW HIM	14
<i>Discovering time alone with God</i>	
2 BUILD THE RELATIONSHIP	22
<i>Learning how to spend time alone with God</i>	
3 LEARN THE WORD	31
<i>Spending time in Bible study</i>	
4 HIDE THE WORD	39
<i>Spending time in Scripture memory</i>	
5 TALK WITH GOD	47
<i>Spending time in prayer</i>	
6 PRAISE THE LORD!	56
<i>Spending time in praise</i>	
7 GIVETHANKS	65
<i>Spending time in thanksgiving</i>	
8 LIVE CLEAN	74
<i>Spending time in confession</i>	
9 PRAY FOR YOURSELF	82
<i>Spending time in petition</i>	
10 PRAY FOR OTHERS	90
<i>Spending time in intercession</i>	
How to Have a Time Alone with God	98
How to Study a Passage of Scripture	99
Bible Response Sheet	100

Moving Toward Maturity Series

How to Memorize Scripture	101
Prayer Action Sheet	102
Thirty Days of Praise	103
Seven Days of Thanksgiving	103
Thirty Days of Confession	106
Seven Days of Petition	107
Record of Petition	108
Record of Intercession	109
Prayers You Can Pray for Others	110
Bible Memory Cards	111

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To Lawanna, my wife, my fellow struggler in death and life, and my heart's companion for the second half of my life.

To the Lord Jesus Christ for teaching me the realities in this book.

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

Jesus Christ has made positive changes in my life. He can change your life too. And He can use you to change others!

Just make yourself AVAILABLE, and Jesus can:

- > Help you know Him better.
- > Work in your life to make you a more mature Christian.
- > Motivate you to share Christ with others.
- > Use you to help other Christians grow toward maturity.
- > Make you a spiritual leader.

My goal for you is: "Just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Colossians 2:6-7).

When that is happening in your life, then just as $2 \times 2 = 4$, and $4 \times 4 = 16$, and on to infinity, so Jesus can use you to multiply His life in others to make an impact on the world. How? One Christian (like you) leads another person to Christ and helps him grow toward maturity. Then the new Christian can lead another person to Christ and help him grow to maturity. And so the process continues. God gives you the tremendous privilege of knowing Him and making Him known to others. That is what your life and the *Moving Toward Maturity* series are all about.

The *Moving Toward Maturity* series includes five discipleship books designed to help you grow in Christ and become a significant part of the multiplication process. *Spending Time Alone with God* is the second book in the series. The other books are:

Following Jesus (Book 1)

Moving Toward Maturity Series

Making Jesus Lord (Book 3)

Giving Away Your Faith (Book 4)

Influencing Your World (Book 5)

God's desire and my prayer for you is that the things you discover on the following pages will become not just a part of your notes, but a part of your life. May all that's accomplished in your life be to His honor and glory.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'G' and a long, sweeping tail.

PURPOSE

This book will help you develop a consistent, daily time alone with God. Learning to have fellowship with God through prayer and Bible study is basic for a disciple of Jesus Christ.

A disciple is a learner and a follower. As you learn to spend time alone with God, you will learn about Jesus Christ and how to follow Him. When you are learning about and following Jesus, you can agree with the Apostle Paul when he said:

"[I am] confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion [maturity] until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

Before you begin doing the sessions in this book, make the commitment to let Jesus Christ bring to completion all He wants to do in you. Remember: God cares more about what is being developed in your life than about what you write in this book.

— A helpful resource to assist you in spending time with God each day —
— is the *Time Alone with God Notebook*. Contact Reach Out Youth —
— Solutions at www.reach-out.org or at the address in the front of this —
— book for more information. —

USES FOR THIS BOOK

1. **SMALL GROUPS:** You can use this book as a member of an organized group (Discipleship Group) led by an adult leader.* Each person in this group signs the commitment sheet on page 13, and agrees to use the book week by week for personal growth.
2. **INDIVIDUALS:** You can go through this book on your own, doing one lesson each week for your own personal growth.
3. **DISCIPLING YOUNGER STUDENTS:** After you apply each session in this book to your own life, you can help a younger person or younger group through *Spending Time Alone With God*.

*The Leader's Guide for the *Moving Toward Maturity* series can be purchased from Reach Out Youth Solutions. See the order information in the back of this book.

PRACTICAL HINTS

(How to get the most out of this book)

If you want to grow as a Christian, you must get real with God in prayer and apply the Bible to your life. Sometimes that's hard, but this book can help you if you will:



1. Begin each session with prayer.
Ask God to speak to you.



2. Use a Bible that's easy to read.
Try the *New International Version*.



3. Work through the entire session.
 - > Look up the Bible verses.
 - > Think through the answers.
 - > Write the answers.
 - > Jot down any questions you have.
 - > Memorize the assigned verse(s).

(Use the Bible memory verses in the back of the book. Groups should select a single translation to memorize, in order to recite the verse(s) together.)



4. Apply each session to your life.
 - > Ask God to show you how to act on what you're learning from His Word.
 - > Obey Him in your relationships, attitudes, and actions.
 - > Talk over the results with other believers who can encourage and advise you.

IF YOU'RE IN A DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

- > Set aside two separate times each week to work on the assigned session. If possible, complete the whole session during the first time. Then during the second time (the day of or the day before your next group meeting), review what you've learned.

- > Take your Bible, this book, the *Time Alone with God Notebook*, and a pen or pencil to every group meeting.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

I, _____, hereby
dedicate myself to the following commitments:

1. To submit myself daily to God and to all that He wants to teach me about growing as a follower of Jesus.
2. To attend all weekly group meetings unless a serious illness or circumstance makes that impossible. If I miss more than one meeting, I will withdraw willingly from the group if it is determined necessary after meeting with the group leader.
3. To complete the assignments without fail as they are due each week.
4. To be actively involved in my local church.

I understand that these commitments are not only to the Lord but to the group and to myself as well. With God's help, I will do my very best to completely fulfill each one.

Signed _____ Date _____

S E S S I O N 1

GET TO
KNOW
HIM



Discovering time alone with God

Let's say you are in a dating relationship. How does it get to be a *relationship*? First you meet that special someone. Then, in time you are attracted to him (or her). Because of the attraction, you want to get to know the other person better. So you begin to spend more time together, and the more time you spend together the better you get to know each other. Eventually the two of you develop a loving *relationship*, and as your love grows stronger, the time you spend together grows more special.

The same is true of your relationship with Jesus Christ. Once you have been introduced to Him, you begin to develop a relationship with Him. As you spend time with Him, that relationship grows stronger.



Just to see where you are right now in your relationship with Jesus, check the appropriate boxes.

My Relationship With Jesus

YES NO

- I have been introduced to Jesus Christ.
- I have accepted Him as my personal Savior.
- I am getting to know Him better.
- I am growing to love Him.
- I spend time with Him every day.
- I would like to know how to spend time alone with Him.
- I would like to improve the time I spend with Him.

If you could talk to Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Billy Graham, or any number of the great people of faith, they would all say that time alone with God strongly influenced their spiritual development. God wants you to be able to say the same thing.

But I go to church. What's so important about spending time alone with God? That's like saying, "I go out with my boyfriend (or girlfriend) every Saturday night. Why do I need to talk with him (or her) at school every day?" By spending time alone with Jesus we get to know Him on a much more personal, intimate level.

Growing, dynamic Christians consistently spend time alone with God.

1

WHAT IS TIME ALONE WITH GOD?

Time Alone with God Is Personal Time with the Lord.

Getting to know Jesus better and better needs to be a top priority for every believer. When we spend time alone with Him, we get to know Him.



Read Philippians 3:8. How important was knowing Jesus Christ to the Apostle Paul?

2

Time Alone with God Is When God Speaks to Us

We're on the run all day -- class to class, friend to friend, appointment to appointment -- and in between band or ball practice, chores at home, an occasional date, a part-time job, and plenty of homework.

By the time we wade through our schedule and watch a little TV, we hit the sack exhausted. But how often do we sit down just to take an honest look at our lives? When do we take time to evaluate who we really are and where we are going. Time alone with God helps us see ourselves as He sees us.



Write out the words of Psalm 139:23-24 and let them become a daily prayer from you to God.

3

Time Alone with God Is a Time to Commit Our Day to the Lord

We worry about tests, dates, family relationships, and other stresses.

Time alone with God provides the opportunity to give all our worries to God and trust Him to take care of us. We aren't big enough to handle our problems. God is!

How often can we commit our lives, with all their worries and problems, to the Lord? (Luke 9:2-3)



Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to trust God with our day.

- > What are two things we should do?

- > What is one thing we shouldn't do?

- > What will God do if we meet these conditions?

WHY HAVE A TIME ALONE WITH GOD?

1

God Desires Our Fellowship

We may or may not think we are important, but the God who made the oceans, mountains, stars, galaxies, and the universe thinks YOU are somebody special! He receives pleasure from being with you!

Maybe you feel that reading the Bible and praying are things you *have* to do -- the duties of a "good Christian." No way! Prayer and Bible study are the communication channels between us and God. By using them to draw near to God, we can become His friends.



Read Exodus 33:11 and describe the kind of relationship Moses had with God.



Jesus Deserves Our Attention

As we get to know Jesus Christ, we soon realize that He had to pay an awesome price to make

our relationship with God possible. Jesus was nailed to a splintered Roman cross. He shed His blood. He sacrificed His life. Why? Because there was no other way to bring God and us together. Jesus loved us enough to pay that price.

God wants to be our friend.



Jesus deserves our attention. He is more than worthy of our praise, our love, our adoration, and our lives. How can we respond to Christ's sacrifice for us? (1 Corinthians 6:20)



The Holy Spirit Keeps Our Relationship with Jesus Growing

Sam attended a Christian youth conference. When he saw the crowd singing, praying, and sharing the excitement of following Jesus, he committed his life to Christ. He was as high as a kite for the next couple of months.

But then his girlfriend dumped him. Instant confusion. He no longer felt the love and peace he had before. All he could think was, "This Jesus Christ business just doesn't work like everybody says it does."

Sam's reaction is common. Many people begin their relationship to Jesus on cloud nine, only to hit the ground with a thud the first time something goes wrong. Spending time alone with God protects us from that "roller coaster" and develops a daily relationship with Jesus Christ.



Read Mark 1:35. Even Jesus, during His time on earth, actively sought fellowship with His Father.

When did Jesus seek fellowship with God?

Where did He go?

What did He do?

Because Jesus met alone with God regularly, He had the strength to do His Father's will, even when He didn't feel like it physically or emotionally. (See Luke 4:1 and 14.) If Jesus desperately needed time with His Father, how much more essential is it for us?

God has goals for our lives. Read the following verses, which describe some goals God has for us. Write those goals in your own words.



1 Corinthians 10:31

Jeremiah 33:3

Philippians 4:6-7

Moving Toward Maturity Series

1. How can spending time alone with God *in Bible study* help us fulfill His goals for our lives? (See Hebrews 4:12.)

2. How can spending time alone with God *in prayer* help us fulfill His goals for our lives? (See Hebrews 4:16.)

3. Review what you have learned in this session, then answer these questions:

Why do I need personal fellowship with God?

Why do I need God to speak to me?

Why do I need a special time to commit every day to the Lord?

4. Right now, choose a time to be alone with God for 15 minutes every day. During that time, read the assigned Scripture for the day (see *Assignment*), and talk with God in prayer. Be open to hearing what He wants to say to you. You may feel a little awkward at first, but soon this will become a special time for you.

5. Commit yourself to meeting alone with God every day at the time you have chosen. Then fill out the following commitment sheet.

Because I desire to glorify Christ in my life,

(name)

agrees to have a daily time alone with God at _____
(place)

and at _____ for the next 10 weeks.
(time)

Signature _____ Date _____

Complete this session by memorizing Mark 1:35.



ASSIGNMENT

1. Have a time alone with God for 15 minutes every day this week. Look up one of the following Bible passages each day. Spend about half of your 15 minutes thinking about what the verses mean, and how they apply to your life. Then spend the rest of your time talking to God in prayer.

Later sessions will give you more specific guidelines, but it's important for you to begin spending time with God now.

Day 1: Philippians 3:8

Day 2: Psalm 139:23-24

Day 3: Proverbs 3:5-6

Day 4: 2 Chronicles 16:9

Day 5: John 4:23

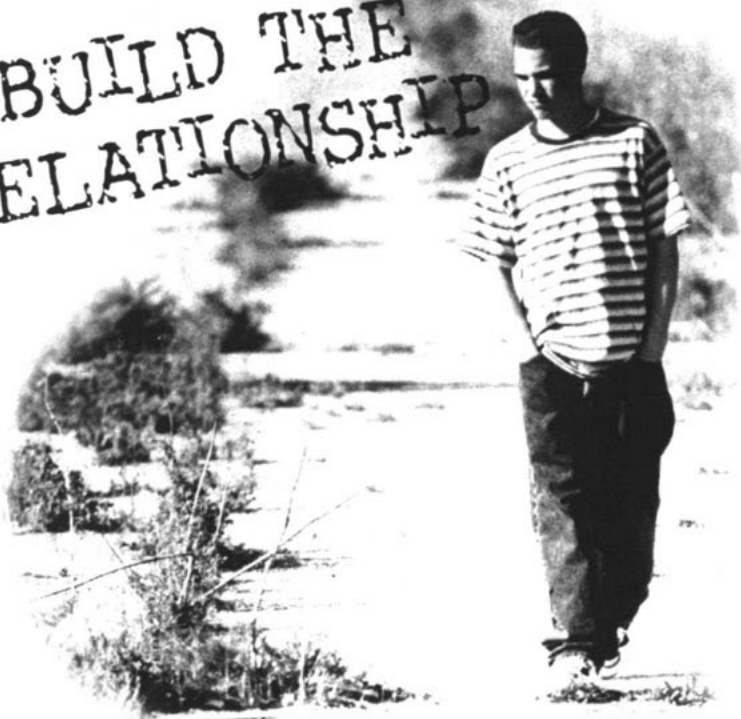
Day 6: Hebrews 4:12

Day 7: Hebrews 4:16

2. Complete Session 2.

S E S S I O N 2

**BUILD THE
RELATIONSHIP**



Learning how to spend time alone with God

First date. The guy's sweaty palms finally get a firm hold on the telephone receiver. It takes only three wrong numbers before his nervous fingers dial the correct combination of digits. He has wanted to ask her out for weeks. On the other end the girl almost faints when she answers. She has wanted to go out with him for months. He has finally asked her, and she is trying not to show how excited she is.

Then come the details. Where will they go? What time? How will they get there? What are they going to talk about? All these questions are important, but number one on the list is: Are they going to like each other? *Everything else hinges on that basic relationship.*



How would you apply this same scenario to your relationship to God? Do you like Him? Do you think He likes you?

BUILDING BLOCKS

The whole concept of "building" suggests work, and building a relationship is no exception.



Look up the following verses and write the actions that will build your relationship with God.

Matthew 6:33

Philippians 3:10

Matthew 22:36-38

LOVE

KNOW

SEEK

As we place these three most important building blocks into the center of our relationship with God, many other building blocks will find their proper place. For example, as we begin to love God, we will express our love for Him in a variety of ways.

Look up each Bible reference to discover how some of these other building blocks express our love for God.

1

Prayer (Philippians 4:6-7)

As our love for God grows, we will want to let Him know that we love Him. Prayer is our opportunity to say that to the Lord.

2

Bible Study (John 14:23)

If we love God, we will want to know what He has to say to us. As we study the Bible, we will discover how deeply He loves us.

3

Faith (Hebrews 11:6)

As we talk to God through prayer and listen through reading His Word, then we will want to trust what He tells us. Loving God will result in trusting Him.

4

Obedience (John 14:21)

We will want to obey what God is telling us. If we love God, we will keep His commandments.



Which of these four expressions of love for God (prayer, Bible study, faith, obedience) do you need most in your life? Why?

How do you think you can develop that expression of your love for God?

PLANNING A TIME ALONE WITH GOD

If someone builds a house, he needs a blueprint. Without preparing a plan, the house will never get built correctly. To build a relationship with God, a certain amount of preparation is necessary. Follow this blueprint.

1

Choose a Time

Make a date with the Lord every day. Jesus often met with the Father in the morning (Mark 1: 35), and His is a good example to follow.

Have you ever seen a football team warm up *after* a game? Or a band warm up *after* a concert? Not a chance. In the same way, God wants us to warm up with Him *before* the action of our day begins. Try getting up early to spend time with Him.

**Remember, God desires
fellowship with you!**

Faithfully meet with God every day at the time you decided. Getting stood up on a date is not fun! God doesn't want us to stand Him up! God understands and forgives our weaknesses, but He still wants us to make and keep our appointments with Him.



Review the time you put on the "Time Alone with God Commitment" last week.

Do you still think that is the best time?

2

Choose a Place

It is usually much easier to communicate with God if we can be alone with Him in a place where we won't get distracted. Abraham talked to God in the desert, Moses on the mountaintop, and Daniel in the quiet of his room.



Think of a good place to meet with the Lord, and write it here:



Choose to Prepare

As we begin our time alone with God, mental attitude is very important. Get up, shower, and get dressed. If we set the alarm for 30 seconds before the time to meet with the Lord, then we'll have a "time asleep with God." But we don't want to approach Him like a hummingbird in a hurricane either. We need to prepare our minds and come to God quietly and reverently.



What do the following verses have to say about our mental attitude?

Psalm 46:10

Isaiah 30:15



Make a list of what you need to do to prepare to meet with God every day.

After we prepare to meet with God, we can count on Him to show up. He will provide some exciting surprises when we meet with Him daily. We can expect Him to respond as we reveal our thoughts to Him. God will meet us.

BIG HINT: Set a time alone with God
goal from Romans 8:29: I want to be
"conformed to the likeness of His Son."

HOW TO GET STARTED



These practical suggestions will help you get started on spending time alone with God.

Go to Bed on Time

It's impossible to stay up late and then expect to wake up fresh the next morning. And it's just as impossible to experience spiritual peace and have a body that's a physical wreck. Set a time to go to bed that will allow at least seven hours of sleep.

Get Up in the Morning

Very few bounce out of bed with an enthusiastic, "Good morning, Lord!" Most of us would rather turn off our ringing alarm with a sledgehammer and go back to sleep. But with a little discipline and practice, you can become a cheerful early riser. Set the alarm. If that doesn't work, set two alarms. Place it across the room so that getting out of bed to turn it off is a must.

Keep a Journal

When we record our thoughts, prayer requests, answers to prayer, and the things God shows us each day, we soon have an unbeatable source of inspiration. We can look back and see the amazing things God has been doing in our lives. Use the *Time Alone with God* notebook for this.

Look to Jesus

Worrying about the bad things that might happen is not the way to start the day. Let's focus our first conscious thoughts in the morning on Jesus Christ. Concentrate on the first words being, "Jesus..."

Don't Give Up

Don't worry about it if you miss your time alone with God one morning. Some people say, "If I miss, it will ruin my day." Not really. Being in Jesus' presence is the goal, not being legalistic. Decide not to miss the next day.

Be Honest

If it feels like this time with God is dull and worthless, tell God so. But don't quit. He would much rather hear honest complaints than not hear our voices at all.

**God would
much rather
hear honest
complaints
than not
hear our
voices at all**

Be Consistent

Some times alone with God will be wonderful. Others will just be routine. But how we feel is rarely an accurate indicator of success. Every day spent alone with the Lord will help us grow stronger, even if we don't feel like we're making much progress.



Read Jeremiah 29:13. The same promise that God made to Jeremiah years ago is still true for us today.

What will happen when we seek God?

How must we seek God?

It's time to get started! If we don't yet know how to pray, what to pray for, or where to begin reading the Bible, it's okay. This book is designed to walk us through these first steps in developing a daily time alone with God. The assignments for the next few weeks will get us going on a regular plan of Bible study. Later we will focus on prayer.

Session 3 will help us learn how to get the most from spending time in God's Word, but the following Bible Response Sheet will get us on the right track. (If you have completed *Following Jesus*, you will be familiar with this Bible study plan.) The following sample is based on the first five verses of John 1.

BIBLE RESPONSE



Date: 5/10

Passage *John 1:1-5*

Title *Jesus brings light and life*

Key Verse *verse 4*

Summary *the word (Jesus)*

(1) was in the beginning

(2) was with God

(3) was God

(4) made all things

(5) was life and

(6) was light

Personal Application

I need to let Jesus be who He wants to be to me. I can experience His life and light by spending 15 minutes alone with Him every morning for the rest of this series of studies.

NOW

try a Bible Response Sheet on your own, using John 1:6-8 as your reference passage. The *Application* is usually the hardest section, but it's also the most important. Notice that the one on page 29 was:

- > *personal* – “I need to let Jesus be who He wants to be to me”;
- > *practical* – “I can experience His life and light”;
- > *measurable* – “By spending 15 minutes...every morning.”



It may seem awkward to use the Bible Response Sheets at first, but it will become very natural with practice.



Complete this session by memorizing 2 Timothy 3:16.

ASSIGNMENT

1. As you spend time alone with God every day this week, begin the habit of filling out a Bible Response sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* for the Scripture you study. (This should take about 7 minutes.) Spend the rest of your 15 minutes in prayer.

Day 1: John 1:9-14

Day 2: John 1:15-18

Day 3: John 1:19-28

Day 4: John 1:29-34

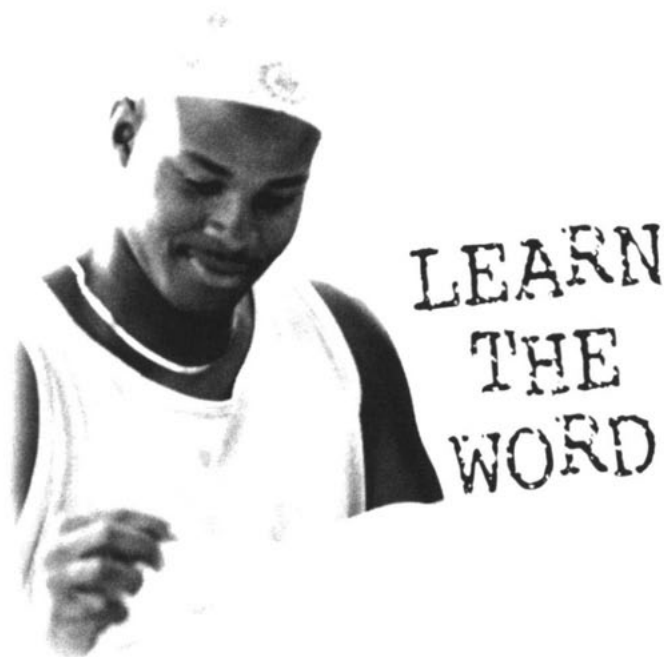
Day 5: John 1:35-42

Day 6: John 1:43-51

Day 7: John 2:1-11

2. Complete Session 3.

S E S S I O N 3



Spending time in Bible study

Eating seems to be one of our favorite pastimes. If you don't believe it, walk into the school cafeteria during lunch and watch the jocks compete in the Olympic food-stacking competition. First, they try to see who can pile the most food on a normal-size plate. With their quivering conglomerations in hand, they do a balancing act back to their tables. Then they scarf it down!

Because eating is such an obsession, dieting is also a popular pastime. Diets are supposed to be practical and good for you, but sometimes they get a little crazy. Most of them have catchy names, so it's important to read the fine print.

"Tropical Diet" might sound exotic, but after a week of only mangoes, papayas, and kiwi fruit, your stomach feels like a monsoon. And then there's the ever-popular "Seefood Diet" – you see food; you eat it.

But perhaps none of today's diets are as unusual as that of the Prophet Jeremiah's thousands of years ago. What did he enjoy feasting on? (Jeremiah 15:16)

Just as food gives strength to our physical bodies, the regular intake of God's Word keeps us spiritually strong. Without regular Bible "meat," you can't expect to be all God wants you to be. Before reading any further, stop now and ask the Lord for the same desire for His Word that Jeremiah had. It's a diet everyone should follow.

WHY SPEND TIME IN GOD'S WORD?



We Will Get to Know Ourselves Better



Read Hebrews 4:12 and note the effect that the Bible can have on different areas of your life. Think about how God's Word affects:

- > your "soul" (personality),

- > your "spirit" (the place that relates uniquely to God),

- > your "thoughts" (mind),

- > the "attitudes of the heart" (motivation).



Describe one specific area of your life that the Word of God needs to “penetrate.”

Letting God’s Word touch our lives is liking having a skillful surgeon use his scalpel to carefully remove any cancerous growths that threaten our well being. God uses His Word to remove the things in our lives that keep us from being all He wants us to become.

2

We Will Get to Know Jesus Better



From John 5:39 decide who is the focus of God’s letter, the Bible? (John 5:39)



What one thing about Jesus do you want the Bible to help you understand better?

3

We Will Grow Spiritually



Write John 17:17 in your own words.



Now think about the meaning of this verse, using the following definitions.

- > Sanctify: to set apart for God's purposes
- > Truth: the reality that underlies everything in life

When Christ prayed that we would be "sanctified by the truth," He prayed that we would become more like Him.



God's Word (the Bible) is truth. Look up these passages and write down one or two key words from each passage to support the fact that the Bible is trustworthy and true.

Psalm 119:160 _____

Luke 1:1-4 _____

2 Timothy 3:16 _____

2 Peter 1:16 _____

1 John 1:1-3 _____



1 Peter 2:2 tells us that just knowing that God's Word is the truth won't automatically make us grow spiritually. What else do we need?

Just as babies need milk to help them grow into healthy adults, believers need God's Word to help us mature into men and women of God.



We Will Have a Successful Life



Read Psalm 1:1-3. What makes a person ultimately successful or "blessed"?

What is the Bible called in verse 2?

Use a dictionary to record the definition of "meditate."

When a person meditates on God's Word daily, he will be like a "tree firmly planted" (NASB). List three results of being firmly planted (v.3).



In what ways do you think meditating on God's Word will make you successful?



We Will Be Able to Handle Temptation



1 Corinthians 10:13 As we spend time in the Bible, God directs us to helpful verses such as:

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."

All of us face temptations. God's Word prepares us to face them. Bible study gives us the ammunition to handle any situation the way Jesus would handle it. (See Matthew 4:1-11.)



What is your big temptation that you need ammo to handle?
How will God's Word make a difference?

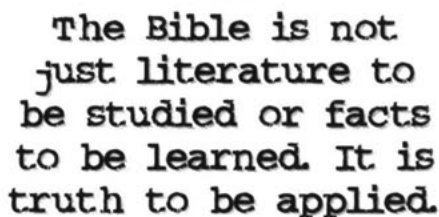
God wants you to know His Word because:
You will get to know yourself better. You will
get to know Jesus better. You will grow as a
Christian. You will have a successful life.
You will learn to handle temptation.

PREPARING TO STUDY GOD'S WORD

Sometimes studying the Bible is like trying to eat lobster with only your fingers. There's plenty of delicious, mouth-watering meat just waiting to be devoured, but we can't quite break the shell that surrounds it. So, as we begin to put some serious time into Bible study, try to collect some tools that can help you "get to the meat" of it.

- > Bible. Get a Bible that's easily read and understood. Try the NIV translation.
- > Bible Dictionary. This offers an alphabetical listing of biblical people, places, terms, and other background information we wouldn't learn from reading only the Bible.
- > English Dictionary. When words appear that are unfamiliar, look them up in the dictionary.
- > Bible Atlas. This tool gives a picture of the geography of the Bible.
- > Commentaries. These books explain and interpret the Bible -- verse by verse or section by section.

Find out from your leader how to get your hands on these tools.



**The Bible is not
just literature to
be studied or facts
to be learned. It is
truth to be applied.**

Now just a few reminders to make our time alone with God more profitable:

- > Stick to the chosen time to meet with God.

- > Study the Bible for *personal* meaning and application, not for how it applies to others.
- > Ask the Holy Spirit to change you through reading God's Word.
- > Fill out a Bible Response sheet *every day*. Keep it as a record of what God is saying to you personally.

Read

"How to Study a Passage of Scripture" on page 99. Then use Psalm 1 to practice the observation, interpretation, application, and memorization method of Bible study. List any new insights from this psalm that might be helpful.

MAKING IT PERSONAL



Complete this session by memorizing Joshua 1:8.



ASSIGNMENT

1. Follow this Bible reading schedule during your daily 15-minute time alone with God. Fill out a Bible Response sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* and spend time in prayer each day.

- Day 1: John 2:12-17
- Day 2: John 2:18-25
- Day 3: John 3:1-8
- Day 4: John 3:9-17
- Day 5: John 3:18-24
- Day 6: John 3:25-36
- Day 7: John 4:1-14

2. Complete Session 4.

S E S S I O N 4



**HIDE
THE WORD**

Spending time in Scripture memory

It's been a long day, but it's finally over and all of your favorite shows are on TV. After three hours of prime-time pleasure, you joyfully discover that the late-late show is one you've wanted to see. So you do. You even stay up for the national anthem. But as you see the words "Test Pattern" on the screen, your groggy mind recalls the phrase "Test tomorrow." Then comes the shocking realization that you have a math test first thing in the morning.

You race to your room, fling open your book, and start learning the equations. You've been over the material in class, so you have some idea of what to do. But those formulas are all so much alike!

Three hours later, you can say the equations in your sleep (and you do). Naturally, you wake up late the next morning and get to school just before the bell rings. Your test is waiting for you on the desk. You read the first question and know exactly where the needed formula is in the book, *but you can't think of it*. You work the problems you can, and spend the rest of the time wondering how you will explain your low grade to your parents.

Sound familiar? All of us have faced similar situations when we weren't as well prepared as we should have been.

We've studied, but we just can't remember what we've learned. Often the same thing happens with the Bible.

It's good to read the Bible and even better to study it carefully. But if we stop there, we won't be any more ready for the emergencies of life than we were for the imaginary math test! We need to memorize God's Word.

**We carry God's Word
with us all the time.**

During biblical times, Jewish men wore *phylacteries* during prayer. Phylacteries were small leather boxes that contained Scriptures written on slips of parchment. (Some Jews still wear phylacteries during their prayer time.)

One box was attached by straps to the left arm to be near the heart, and another was placed right between the eyebrows to be near the mind. These men literally carried God's Word on their hearts and on their minds.

We don't have to wear little leather boxes, but we can carry God's Word with us all the time.



Read Proverbs 6:20-23. How can we take God's teachings with us?

What will be the results when we do?

BENEFITS OF SCRIPTURE MEMORY

1

The Bible Comes Alive

Scripture memory brings new life to Bible study. Read Psalm 19:7-14. According to verses 7-9, God's Word:

- > Revives our soul (v. 7).
- > Is a source of truth and wisdom (v. 7).
- > Is a source of joy and enlightenment (v. 8).
- > Endures forever (v. 9).
- > Is always sure and righteous (v. 9).



What are some other advantages of Scripture memory, based on verses 10-14?

2

Gain Strength to Face Everyday Situations

Obviously, we can't study the Bible all day long. But when we carry its teachings in our minds and hearts, we can recall those truths when we need them.



In **Ephesians 6:17** how is God's Word described?

Scripture memory allows us to carry our "weapon" with us all the time.

3

We Will Prosper Spiritually

Last week, we examined a passage that compares a person who meditates on God's Word daily with a tree firmly planted.



From Psalm 1:1-3. Try to recall from memory the three results of being "firmly planted." Then look back at Session 3 to review.



We Have Strength to Overcome Temptation

We have already seen that *studying* the Bible can help us handle temptation. But how can *memorizing* Scripture help us even more?



Look at Psalm 119:9-11. What did David say about memorizing Scripture?



We Become More Effective in Witnessing for Jesus Christ

Knowing God's Word gives us confidence to witness.



According to Psalm 119:12-13, what will we do when we know God's Word?



We Begin to See Things from God's Perspective

When we "hide God's Word in our hearts," we begin to think the way God thinks.



According to Romans 12:2, how does this change in thinking take place?

WE CAN MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

In spite of the many benefits that Scripture memory offers, you might be thinking, "It's no use. It sounds good, but I have a lousy memory." Before giving up, try this simple experiment:

What's your name? Address? Phone number? Where do you go to school? What classes are you taking? What are your teachers' names?

Our Memory Is Good!

We learn dates for history class. We remember how to get to our friends' houses. And if that "special" person lets us know that he/she has a birthday coming up, we are sure to remember the date. Anything is easy to remember if our interest level is high enough and if we use it enough.

Our Attitude Makes a Difference

Memorizing is a developed skill that can be improved. Adopting an attitude of *confidence* and *desire* will help us memorize.



Read Psalm 119:127-131. What words in this passage show us that David had a desire to know God's Word?

What are some of the reasons that you desire to know God's Word?

We Have What We Need

That includes the ability to remember what God wants us to remember.



In John 14:26, what has Jesus promised us?



Fill in the following blanks and make these a faith statement to God:

-> I can memorize Scripture because _____

-> I can memorize Scripture because _____

-> I can memorize Scripture because _____

STEPS TO SCRIPTURE MEMORY

1

Pray

Every time we begin to memorize Scripture, it will help us to remember to pray in "3-D."

-> *Decide* to memorize.

-> *Desire* to do it.

-> *Delight* in doing it.

2

Plan

If memorizing Scripture doesn't come naturally to you, the plan on page 111 can make memorization easier. Turn there now before going further in this session. Read each step carefully and understand it before continuing.

Scripture memory takes practice and discipline.

3

Practice

Now that we have a plan, let's put it into practice. Let's continue to memorize the verse(s) we are assigned each week. *Don't try to do too many at first.* Remember to review each verse every day for at least 30 days.

Find a friend who wants to memorize Scripture, then practice your verses on each other every week. Hold each other accountable for learning new verses and reviewing the ones already memorized.

4

Persist

Work on the memory verses every day. Don't give up. Review! Review! Review! That's the only way to remember the verses.

Review!
Review!
Review!

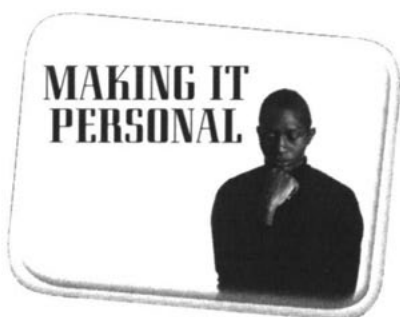
Beware of certain traps that can mess up Scripture memory. Watch out for:

- > Spiritual pride - there's no reason to get puffed up over learning a few Bible verses.
- > Overload - don't take on too much at one time.
- > Procrastination - don't put it off.
- > Burnout- don't quit.

**Inch by inch, it's a cinch.
Yard by yard, it's hard.**

Spend

some time right now going through the steps you have just learned, and memorize Psalm 119:9-11. When you finish, review all the verses you have memorized so far in this book and in *Following Jesus*. Continue to do this every day. Make sure you know each verse word perfect.



ASSIGNMENT

1. Continue your daily time alone with God. Fill out a Bible Response sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* for each day.

Day 1: John 4:15-26

Day 2: John 4:27-38

Day 3: John 4:39-54

Day 4: John 5:1-16

Day 5: John 5:17-24

Day 6: John 5:25-35

Day 7: John 5:36-47

2. Review all the verses you have memorized so far.

3. Spend time in prayer every day this week. Prayer is the topic of the next session.

4. Complete Session 5.

S E S S I O N 5



Spending time in prayer

It's 6 A.M. Your alarm rings and your first impulse is to catch another few minutes of sleep before school. But you've promised God that today you will start getting up earlier in order to spend some time with Him. It would be a lot easier to spend time with God at the Church of the Inner Spring (mattress, that is) under the warm protection of Reverend Sheets. But you figure your snoring isn't what the psalmist meant by "make a joyful noise." So how do you convince yourself to get up and keep your commitment to the Lord?

The first step is to have a proper understanding of prayer. Some people think of prayer as a chore, much like taking out the garbage. It's something they don't really enjoy doing, but they believe it has to be done.

Yet prayer unlocks the combination that opens the door to all the riches of the kingdom of God. Through it we draw near to God. Not praying keeps that door shut. Consistent praying opens wide the door into God's presence.



THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER

As we pray, we discover: (1) who God is, (2) what God wants us to do, and (3) how He wants us to do it. Through prayer we learn to converse with God. As we talk with Him, we get to know Him on a personal level. And soon we will discover that we have the power we need to do whatever God asks us to do.



Read John 14:12-14. What kind of power results from prayer?

What does Jesus promise to give us when we pray?



According to John 16:24, what is one major reason for not receiving answers to prayer?

Sometimes we don't even bother to ask God for the things we want, and then we complain when we don't get them. In an average week, about how much time do you spend in *personal* prayer?



Do you believe you're spending enough time in prayer, or would you like to spend more?



MOTIVATION FOR PRAYER

Douglas Thornton was a student who saw the positive effects that time alone with God had on some of his classmates.

Thornton had trouble getting up every morning, but he was determined to begin each day by spending time with God.

His strong motivation wouldn't let him give up. He finally built a device

from a fishing pole, four hooks, and an alarm clock. When his alarm clock rang in the morning, the pole would release to pull on the four hooks, which were attached to the four corners of his sheets. Once the covers were pulled off the bed, it wasn't so hard for him to get up. Sounds pretty ridiculous, doesn't it? That is, until we ask the question: "How much did Douglas Thornton want to know God?" He wanted to know God enough to do something ridiculous.

Why should we pray? What should we ask for? Are there conditions we must meet in order to obtain an answer? What are the results of prayer? Until we know, we may not have a strong motivation to pray.

What can we discover in the following passages that encourages us to pray?

John 15:7-11 _____

James 5:13-16 _____

2 Chronicles 7:14 _____

Matthew 6:5-13 _____

Matthew 26:41 _____

Maybe past commitments to pray more often have fallen flat for you. Could that be because we don't have a real desire to pray? Our commitment to pray comes from our motivation to meet with God. If we have no inner desire to meet with Him we're much less likely to honor our commitment to Him. But if we really want to know God better, we'll find a way to spend time alone with Him in prayer every day.

On a scale of 1-10, what is your degree of motivation to pray?
_____ Why did you pick that number?





GOD'S ANSWERS TO PRAYER

God wants to give us what we need. But prayer is not like putting a quarter in a vending machine to get what we want automatically.

To receive answers to our prayers, we must ...

- > put ourselves in the position to know God;
- > receive what God has to give us; and then
- > do what He wants us to do.

**God never lets our
prayers go unanswered.**

God never lets our prayers go unanswered. When we ask God for something, He will respond to our requests in one of three ways.

1

YES

When we pray for something according to God's will, He promises an affirmative answer. He loves us and wants to answer yes to our prayer requests.



According to 1 John 5:14-15, what confidence can we have when we ask God for something? What is the condition to His saying yes to our requests?

2

WAIT

God has a good reason for not giving us what we ask for right away. We may not always understand why He chooses to let us wait, but we can be sure that He is doing what is best for us.



According to what James says in James 1:2-4, what is one reason God might have us wait for an answer to prayer?

What attitude should we have if God tells us to wait? (Psalm 27:13-14)



NO

Just as good parents must sometimes say no to their children's requests, God must also refuse our prayer requests from time to time.



Reading 1 Chronicles 22:7-10, what did David want to do, and why did God say no?

What request did Paul make that God refused? (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

What is another reason the Lord might refuse to answer a prayer? (James 1:6-8)



Think of one prayer in your past when God said yes, one when He said wait, and one when He said no. Be specific.

Looking back, can you see why He answered those prayers in the ways He did?



THE PROMISES OF PRAYER

God's Word provides hundreds of promises pertaining to prayer. Let's look up the following passages to discover how some of these promises apply to us personally. Then let's begin to claim them for ourselves in our time alone with God.

Prayer Promises

The Promise

What It Means to Me

Matthew 7:7-8 _____

James 1:5 _____

Philippians 4:19 _____

Philippians 4:6-7 _____



DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF PRAYER

So far, this session has been about prayer in general. But there are different aspects of prayer. What you have learned so far in this session applies to all aspects of prayer, but each aspect has a slightly different purpose.

The Scriptures that follow show us different kinds of prayer. Look up the passages and then describe the purpose of each element of prayer.



Praise - Hebrews 13:15



Thanksgiving - Psalm 118:1



Confession - Proverbs 28:13



Petition - John 16:23-24



Intercession - I Timothy 2:1-2

Spend

a few minutes now evaluating your prayer relationship with God.



1. In what ways does your prayer life need to mature?

2. What can you do to improve it?

3. Now spend some time in prayer. Tell the Lord about your desire or lack of desire to pray. Ask Him to empower and motivate you toward a consistent prayer life.

Complete this session by memorizing John 15:7.



ASSIGNMENT

1. Continue your daily Bible reading. Fill out a Bible Response sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* for each day.

Day 1: John 6:1-14

Day 2: John 6:15-21

Day 3: John 6:22-31

Day 4: John 6:32-43

Day 5: John 6:44-52

Day 6: John 6:53-63

Day 7: John 6:64-71

2. Complete Session 6.

3. Begin to familiarize yourself with the Prayer Action sheet (on page 102). We will learn how to use this sheet to get more from our prayer times.

4. Spend 15 minutes alone with God each day. Spend the first 7 minutes doing Bible reading and the Bible Response sheet. Use the rest of the time to talk to God in prayer.

S E S S I O N 6



**PRAISE
THE
LORD!**

Spending time in praise

How do you feel when the coach says the top 20 people will make the basketball team, and you're number 21? Or when everybody but you gets a date to homecoming? Or when your dad gets a new job, and you have to move away from all your friends? Or when your parents divorce? Or when someone close to you dies?

Everyone faces problems, disappointments, and pain. Yet people react differently to difficult circumstances. What disappointing circumstances are you facing now? How are you responding to it?

Problem

How I Am Responding



Read 2 Samuel 21:15-22 to look at the problems that David had to face. His problems were giants (literally)! Once, in the thick of battle, David became weak and exhausted. He looked up and saw a giant bearing down on him with a new sword and an eight-pound spear. But David's men rescued him and killed the giant.

Later in the war, David's men killed three more giants. One, who was thought to be the brother of Goliath, carried a spear as big as a 4'x6' board. Another giant had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. Talk about huge, ugly problems!



Check out how David handled *his* giants in 2 Samuel 22:1-7. How did David feel during his struggles? (vv. 5-6)

How did he overcome his negative feelings? (vv. 4, 7)

What did David do after his battle? (v. 1)

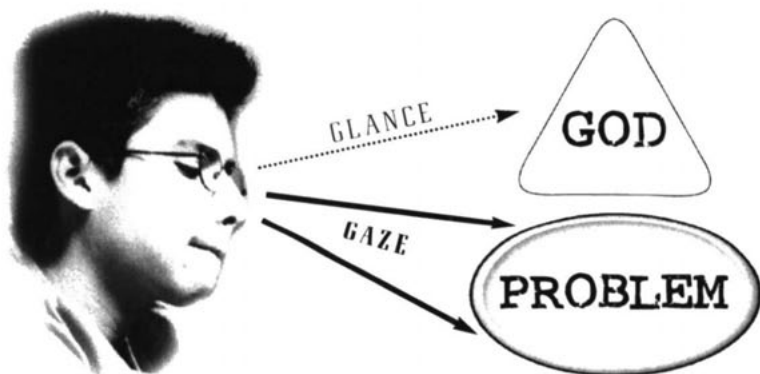
**Praise
expresses
worship
to God
for who
He is.**

David's initial response was to ask God's help and then to praise Him. Praise is open, unrestrained worship of God. It expresses to God the qualities that are true of Him. Praise adores God for who He is. Praise was David's response - even during times of trouble.



RESPONDING WITH PRAISE

This diagram portrays a common response to problems.

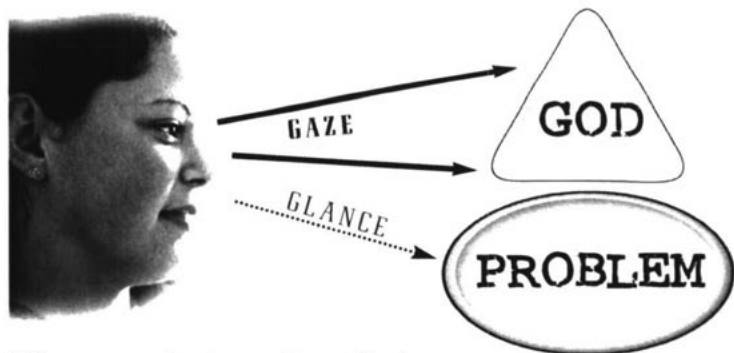


GAZE: to stare continuously.
GLANCE: to take a quick look.

When a problem arises, we think, "God, why did You do this to me?" We concentrate our thoughts, energy, and feelings on the problem. Then anxiety and fear begin to plague us.

When Peter was walking on the water to meet Jesus, why did he begin to sink? (Matthew 14:30)

There is a better way to deal with problems. The following diagram is based on Psalm 34:1-8. Read it and write down all the words that talk about problems or troubles. Now look particularly at verse 5: "Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame."



When we are having problems, God wants us to look to Him.

So when a problem comes up, we can say, "God, You are sufficient to take care of this situation. I look to you . . . I trust You. I praise You." When we respond with praise, we experience the peace of God.



LEARNING HOW TO EXPRESS PRAISE

One of the greatest meals ever invented is the "potluck" supper. Every family prepares a dish to bring that is put with all the other families' dishes. If no one prepares ahead of time, the supper might consist of 10 bags of Doritos. But when everyone prepares and brings something different, it's the best meal in town.

Praise works in much the same way. For it to be the most meaningful, we need to prepare to bring several different "dishes."



Read Psalm 105:1-5. This passage suggests several things we bring to praise the Lord. What are they? Compare your findings with the following list.

Bring Thanksgiving

"Give thanks to the Lord" (Psalm 105: 1). Come before God with an attitude of thanks. Without an "attitude of gratitude," it's hard to praise the Lord. Thank God for one thing He has given you, and write it here.

Bring Our Voices

"Call on His name" (Psalm 105: 1). To *call* is to speak to God out loud. Let's practice this part of our praise right now by saying, "I praise You, Lord." Say it aloud and write it below.

Bring Our Stories

"Make known among the nations what He has done" (Psalm 105: 1). Let's think back to some of the wonderful things God has done for us. Let's tell Him how we have seen Him work in our lives in the past. Let's praise Him for each of those times He has been there when we needed Him. List examples below.

Bring Our Songs

"Sing to Him" (Psalm 105:2). Practice singing a song out loud to God. Try it even if you only sing in the shower. Think of a praise song. Write the title below. Sing it out loud.

Bring Adoration

"Glory in His holy name" (Psalm 105:3). Read Isaiah 9:6. Meditate on the names of God listed there. Praise Him for one that is especially meaningful to you. In the space below, write God's name. Write an

expression of praise using that name.

Bring a Seeking Attitude

"Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always" (Psalm 105:3-4).

- > Seek Him rejoicing.
- > Seek His strength.
- > Seek His presence.

**If we continually
seek God, we will be
able to praise Him
even when we face
difficult situations.**

Bring Our Bibles

"Remember the wonders He has done" (Psalm 105:5). Look in God's Word and then praise Him for His mighty acts. Psalms 145-150 are excellent examples of praise. Read Psalm 147 and write out your praise to God.



MAKING PRAISE MEANINGFUL

Follow these suggestions to add meaning to your expression of praise.

1

Express Praise Aloud to God

Find a place where you can be alone, or if other people are around, whisper praise to God.

2

Learn to Praise Spontaneously

At first, we might only echo passages from the Bible that offer praise to God. But soon we will feel praise rising from inside of us. Express that praise to God.

3

Overcome Awkward Feelings to Enjoy Praise

The more we express praise to God the more enjoyable it will become. It gives us the right focus and brings us into God's presence.

Now to put all you've learned about praise into practice, let's "walk through" a sample passage of Scripture. Then try one on your own.

Scripture passage: "The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him" (Exodus 15:2).



PRAYER ACTION



Date 10/15

PRAISE: Write one expression of praise.

*Lord, I praise You that You are the one
who gives me strength. I can face today with
joy and confidence in You. I praise and
exalt You because Jesus is my salvation!*

Use 2 Samuel 22:2-4 to try it on your own.

PRAYER ACTION



Date

PRAISE: Write one expression of praise.

You will find "Thirty Days of Praise" on page 103. It will give you thirty passages of Scripture to use to praise the Lord - one for each day of the month.

Complete this session by memorizing Psalm 146:1-2.



ASSIGNMENT

1. Continue daily Bible reading during your time alone with God. Fill out a Bible Response sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* each day.

Day 1: John 7:1-9

Day 2: John 7:10-20

Day 3: John 7:21-31

Day 4: John 7:32-39

Day 5: John 7:40-53

Day 6: John 8: 1-11

Day 7: John 8:12-24

2. Make praise a part of your daily prayer life. To get started, begin with these verses. Complete the *Praise* section of the Prayer Action sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* after each reading.

Day 1: Psalm 8

Day 2: Psalm 23

Day 3: Psalm 34:1-3; 50:1-6

Day 4: Psalm 63:1-4; 66:1-7

Day 5: Psalm 67

Day 6: Psalm 84

Day 7: Psalm 86

Additional passages to help us praise God are found in “Thirty Days of Praise” on page 103.

3. Complete Session 7.

S E S S I O N 7



GIVE
THANKS

Spending time in thanksgiving

It's finally Christmas morning. You've been on a continual shopping spree since the Labor Day sales, looking for just the right gift for each member of your family. The big moment comes; the wrapping paper flies; and you wait to hear all the glowing comments of gratitude.

"Oh. A chartreuse sweater. I guess they were out of navy."

"I already have an electric shoestring-lacer."

"This *Ant Farming Through the Ages* book looks . . . nice. I'll read it later."

"I think this Mold-O-Matic penicillin-maker will work better in the attic."

Four months of hard work and not one "thank you"! It's a lousy feeling

to go out of your way to do something special for people and then see that they don't appreciate it.

God's gifts to us are "good and perfect" (James 1: 17). Think about how He must feel when we don't bother to say thanks for what He has given us.



GOD IS . . .

If we know what God is really like, we can thank Him for every circumstance.



Read Psalm 100. List any words that describe what God is like. Then compare that list with the one that follows.

The Lord Is Our Creator

"It is He who made us" (Psalm 100: 3).



Check out Genesis 1: 1, 27-28, and Psalm 139:13-16.
What kind of Creator is God?

The Lord Is Good

"For the Lord is good" says Psalm 100:5.

What would you do if someone gave you a million dollars?

- > Spit in his face.
- > Yawn and say you could take it or leave it.
- > Thank him and say, "What can I do for you?"

What good things do we miss out on when we seek God? (Psalm 34:8-10)



According to Psalm 34:1-3, how does God want us to respond to His goodness?

The Lord Is Loving

"His love endures forever" (Psalm 100: 5). This idea, appearing 240 times in the Old Testament, is a major theme of the Bible. Because God loves us, He is personally committed to us, even when we fail to love Him.



Psalm 63:3 tells us how much God's love is worth?

The Lord Is Faithful

"His faithfulness continues through all generations" (Psalm 100: 5). We can trust God because He is always reliable.



Read the following verses and then write your own definition of faithfulness: Numbers 23:19, Lamentations 3:22-23, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, and 2 Timothy 2:13.

Faithfulness = _____

Martin Reinhart was a German pastor who lived during the Thirty Years War. In 1636, he buried 5,000 people who had lived in his community (an average of almost 14 per day). In spite of the war, pestilence, and heartache, he wrote this table blessing for his children:

*Now thank we all our God,
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices,
Who from our mothers' arms
Hath led us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.*

Because God's character is consistent, we will never face a situation for which we cannot thank Him.



KEYS TO GIVING THANKS

Giving Thanks Reveals an Attitude

Our lack of thankfulness can be downright embarrassing.



Consider the example recorded in Luke 17:11-19. Jesus

came near the ten men who had leprosy, a disease that eats the skin. Lepers were outcasts during Bible times, because the disease was so contagious. But Jesus had compassion on these men. He healed them and instructed them to go to the

priests and be declared clean again. Only one of the men took the time to say "Thank You" to Jesus.

What attitude did this man have that Jesus noticed?

Why do you think the other nine didn't say thanks?

Jesus wanted the lepers to realize that *the giver is more important than the gift*. But only one out of ten got the message.

If you had been one of those lepers, would you have been the one who said thanks or one of the other nine? Why?



Giving Thanks Means Entering In

In Psalm 100 we are told to "enter [God's] gates with thanksgiving" (v. 4). Read the Psalm and write your reflection below.

Suppose the following people knocked on your door and wanted to come in. Would you let them?

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A thief |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | An encyclopedia salesman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A member of a strange cult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | A friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Your dad |

Our willingness to let them into our home probably depends on what kind of relationship we have with each of them. The better we know people the more likely we are to let them enter.

How can we enter God's gates? Isaiah 22:22 refers to "the key to the house of David." But who holds the key to the house? (Revelation 3:7-8)

We can "enter His gates" if we know and walk with Jesus Christ. As we enter His gates, we enter with thanksgiving. Over and over again, the Bible teaches us to give thanks.

Over and over again, the Bible teaches us to give thanks.

Look up each of these verses and summarize them: Psalm 7:17; 92: 1; 107: 1; 118:1, 29.



Psalm 100 also instructs us to praise God. Both praise and thanksgiving bring pleasure to God, are essential to prayer, and are supernatural responses when we know God. Praise and thanksgiving are similar, so take a closer look to see how they differ.

Praise:

- > Adores God for who He is.
- > Worships Him as a person.
- > Honors His character.

Thanksgiving:

- > Appreciates what God has done.
- > Expresses gratitude for His works.
- > Honors His actions.

A man's marriage vows will say, "I take thee to be my lawful wedded wife." We wouldn't say, "I take thee to be my lawful wedded cook," because "cook" only describes one thing the bride does. It isn't an accurate description of *who she is*. After the wedding, *thanks* will be due her for cooking good meals. But *praise* will be reserved for her being your wife.

The same distinction is true of our relationship with God. We *praise* God for *who He is*, and we *thank* Him for *what He does*.

Giving Thanks Requires Working It Out

List some of the good things that God has given you. Look around right now and write down the things that come to mind.

We praise God
for who He is,
and we thank Him
for what He does.

If you lost everything on the above list in the next 24 hours, could you still give thanks to God?

If things are tough right now, take heart. Job was a man who lost

everything he had -- his health, wealth, friends, and even his family. But God still wanted Job to give Him thanks for what He had done.



Read Job 38:4-18. What was God trying to get Job to realize?



1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 offers a New Testament version of what Job learned. Read the passage and write down what the Apostle Paul had to say about thanksgiving.

What difficulties in your life make it hard for you to give thanks?



Right now, as a faith statement of thanks (like Job and Paul expressed) think about your problems, disappointments, and heartaches. List them here, thanking God for each one.

Now

let's walk through an example of how you can begin to give thanks during your time alone with God. Using Psalm 84:11, first read through the verse, and then pray through the verse to express your thanks to God in a personal way.



Here's an example of how you might "pray through" Psalm 84: 11:

"Lord, I thank You that You are my shield. That means I can count on You to protect me as I try to patch up a relationship with a friend who is angry at me."

Then, after praying through the verse, fill out the *Thanksgiving* section of the Prayer Action sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook*.

PRAYER ACTION



THANKSGIVING: Write down what you are most thankful for today.

Lord, I give You thanks that You will protect me as I face my angry friend.

Use the "Seven Days of Thanksgiving" on page 103 to give you specific verses and ideas for thanking God.

To complete this session, memorize 1 Thessalonians 5:18.



ASSIGNMENT

1. Continue daily Bible reading, using the Bible Response sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* each day.

Day 1: John 8:25-36

Day 2: John 8:37-46

Day 3: John 8:47-59

Day 4: John 9:1-7

Day 5: John 9:8-25

Day 6: John 9:26-41

Day 7: John 10: 1-6

2. Study one of the "Seven Days of Thanksgiving" (page 103) each day this week, and complete the *Thanksgiving* section daily on the Prayer Action sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook*. (To complete the Praise section, you will want to continue the "Thirty Days of Praise" on page 103.)

3. Complete Session 8.

S E S S I O N 8

LIVE
CLEAN



Spending time in confession

Can you remember doing something wrong as a little kid, and then trying to keep your parents from finding out? Maybe you broke your mother's vase and hid the pieces, hoping she wouldn't notice. But you felt like a criminal. And every time your parents walked past the bare spot where the vase used to be, your heart skipped a beat. You sensed that they sensed something was wrong, and you became uncomfortable around your own parents. Before long you began to wish they *would* find out.

When your parents finally discovered your cover-up, they either said, "Accidents happen. Don't you know we love you more than that old vase?" or they disciplined you and said, "That was an expensive antique. Next time be more careful." But either way, you were suddenly *free*! When you no longer had to live with guilt, you discovered a wonderful sense of relief.

It would have been easier to have confessed in the first place. But most children don't understand that confession leads to freedom.

Unfortunately, neither do many adults.

How about you? When you sin against God, do you try to hide your sin?
Or do you quickly confess?



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CONFESS OUR SINS?

Everyone needs to know about confession. Why? Because God is a holy God who hates sin. While man is sinful, he cannot be in God's presence. The Bible says that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The Bible also teaches that the result of sin is death – eternal separation from God. (See Romans 6:23.) So if everyone has sinned, and the result of sin is spiritual separation from God, it might seem that no one can have a right relationship with God.

But because of God's love for us, He provided a way to bring us back to Him. The sacrifice of His Son bridged the gap between man and God. Jesus' death on the cross made a right relationship with God possible.



Write out the following verses in your own words.

1 Peter 3:18

Ephesians 1:7

Through confession we come to Christ and claim God's forgiveness of our sin. The Apostle Paul said, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Confession is only the beginning. Confession is still important after we

have accepted Jesus Christ. We continue to sin, and we need to receive God's forgiveness for those sins continually.

So after becoming a believer, confession means that we

- > agree with God when we do wrong, and
- > accept God's forgiveness that has already been provided for us through Jesus' death.

Confessing sins is easier than trying to hide them!



HOW DO WE CONFESS OUR SINS?



Agree With God

Like most people, our definition of *confess* is to tell or admit something to someone (like telling your parents you broke their vase). But in the Bible, the Greek word translated as *confess* means "to agree with" or "to acknowledge." So when we know that we are guilty, we reply, "You are right, Lord. I confess (agree)." Then we experience His forgiveness for our sins.

In order to confess our sins, we need to see *ourselves from God's perspective*. That means we need to get rid of our *prideful point of view* and *pray to see ourselves the way God sees us*.



Psalm 51 is a great example of confession. David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and then arranged a battle strategy that would "accidentally" kill her husband. This psalm was written as he came to the Lord confessing his sins of adultery and murder -- some pretty heavy charges.

What attitudes did David ask God to have toward him? (v. 1)

- > _____
- > _____

What did David ask God to do for him? (v. 2)

-> _____

-> _____

Against whom did David sin? (v. 4)

How did David agree with God about his sin? (v. 4)

Confession agrees with God that:

-> What we did was wrong.

-> Jesus Christ has already paid the price of our sin when He died on the cross.

-> We are cleansed from our sin by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross.

-> We turn away from our sins.

2

Accept Forgiveness

When Christ died, He provided forgiveness for us. He forgives us over and over again. Because we sin over and over again, Jesus forgives us over and over again.



According to Psalm 103:12, how far away from us does God remove our sin?

God forgives you for:
sins in the past.
sins in the present.
sins in the future.



Read Isaiah 53:4-6. Now let's picture our sin as a huge rock on our shoulders, weighing us down. We would remove it if we could, but it is too heavy for us. Then imagine Christ lifting the rock and placing it on His own shoulders. Why is Jesus qualified to take away our sin and put it upon Himself?



Read Psalm 51 again and list some of the positive results that we can experience by accepting God's forgiveness through confession.

verse 2 _____

verse 7 _____

verse 8 _____

verse 10 _____

verse 12 _____

verse 13 _____

verse 14 _____

verse 15 _____

Confession is the key that unlocks the door of God's forgiveness, taking away our sin and guilt.

Confession
is the key that
unlocks the
door of God's
forgiveness,
taking away our
sin and guilt.



HOW CAN WE LIVE A CLEAN LIFE?

God forgives our sin -- no matter how bad it is. The wonderful thing about confession is that He also takes away the guilt along with the sin. We are completely clean!



Check out God's promise to us in 1 John 1:9.

Rewrite the verse in your own words as it relates to sins you have committed.



What sins do you need to confess? Right now, confess them to the Lord and claim God's forgiveness for them. Be specific. Write your prayer here.

Thank God for cleaning those sins out of your life.

If your sin is against God, confess it to God and make things right with Him.

If your sin is against another person, confess it to God and make things right with the other person.

If your sin is against a group, confess it to God and make things right with the group.



We can stay clean all the time! How? Make confession a daily habit.

1

Prepare Our Hearts

Meditate on these verses from Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

2

Search Our Hearts

As we read God's Word, we ask ourselves, "Does this Scripture point out a sin in my life?"

3

Confess Our Sin

Remember, to confess means simply "to agree with God." So agree with God about your sins, and then receive His forgiveness.

4

Claim God's Promise

Let's take the promises that God gives us in verses like 1 John 1:9 and believe these for ourselves.

On

page 106 you will find "Thirty Days of Confession". Use that during the next week. To know how to do that, let's walk through the first day's assignment.

MAKING IT PERSONAL



Under *Sins to Confess* for Day 1, locate the reference verse, 2 Timothy 2:22, and the question, "Do you have impure thoughts?" After reading the verse and considering the question, write your prayer of confession.

PRAYER ACTION



Confession: Write down any sin(s) you need to confess.

Lord, I confess that I do have impure thoughts. Specifically, I am struggling with lust.

Complete this session by memorizing I John 1:9.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Fill out a Bible Response sheet each day in your *Time Alone with God Notebook*.

Day 1: John 10:7-18

Day 2: John 10: 19-30

Day 3: John 10: 31-42

Day 4: John 11: 1- 16

Day 5: John 11: 17-27

Day 6: John 11:28-44

Day 7: John 11:45-57

2. Study one of the "Thirty Days of Confession" (page 106) during your time alone with God each day this week. Complete the Confession section of your daily Prayer Action sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook*. Continue to fill out the *Praise and Thanksgiving* sections.

3. Complete Session 9.

**PRAY FOR
YOURSELF**



Spending time in petition

Hey, Mom! I'm starving. Do you have a piece of bread I can munch on until breakfast is ready?"

"No, Dear, but here's a rock. It has nine essential minerals."

"Uh, I think I'll pass. How long till the eggs are ready?"

"We're not having eggs today. I've fixed you a nice plate of stinging scorpions -- good eating if you can catch them without getting stung."

"I just remembered -- I'm starting my diet today. I think I'll skip breakfast. By the way, did you pick up those new fish for my aquarium?"

"I started to, but the pet shop had the cutest assortment of baby

rattlesnakes, so I got them instead. I put them in your room. I'm surprised you haven't found them."

This conversation sounds like it may have come from a weird movie script, but it is actually based on the words of Jesus Himself (Matthew 7:9-10; Luke 11: 11-12). What was Jesus saying? Loving parents want to give their children what they ask for, so long as it is good for them. They don't substitute dangerous or harmful gifts for good ones.

Neither does God. He wants us to have good things. He always answers our prayers and always gives us good gifts – even though what He gives may be different from what we ask for. That process of asking for our needs is called petition.

The last three sessions were devoted to praise, thanksgiving, and confession -- aspects of prayer that are centered around your response to God. Hopefully these three ingredients of prayer have helped you to know God better. Now you are ready to begin exploring how God responds to you. As you go to Him with your petitions, He supplies what you need. Jesus taught that asking for things in prayer is very important.



Read Matthew 7:7-8. In this passage, what three commands does Jesus give? (v. 7)

What three promises does He make? (v. 8)



ASKING

Picture this: all God has to give is stored in a huge, inexhaustible tank. Imagine that He has a large channel flowing out of that tank into your life. At the end of the channel there is a valve

that controls the flow of the channel. Petition is what turns that valve so that what God has can flow to you.

When we ask God to supply the things we need, there are certain attitudes and conditions that open and/or close the tank.



What specific guidelines for petition are given in the following Bible references?

Matthew 21:22

John 15:7

James 4:2-3

John 16:23-24



What do you think it means to ask "in Jesus' name"?

Praying "in Jesus' name" simply means that you pray according to the character and purpose of Jesus. In other words, what He desires for you should be the same thing you desire for yourself. To pray "in Jesus' name" is to say, "Jesus, I want what You want for me."



SEEKING

When God makes a promise, it can't be broken. The Bible is full of God's promises to His followers. God desires for us to find His promises in our Bible and then make them our own.



Look up the following verses; briefly record the promises given there; and describe what each promise means to you personally.

God's Promise

My Response

John 14:12-14

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Ephesians 3:20

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Philippians 4:19

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I John 5:13-15

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

— "Seven Days of Petition" (page 107) includes more promises to claim
— this week. Study them; apply them to your situation; ask God to show
— you how awesome His claims really are!
—
—
—



KNOCKING

Do you ever have the type of math book that has all the answers in the back? If so, do you always wait until you have worked the problem to check the answer? No way. First you sneak a peek at the right answer, then work on the problem until it comes out right.

That's how we should pray. God's promises are like the answers in the back of the math book. He wants us to know them ahead of time. When a problem comes along, God has a promise to address the problem.

For example, make a list of the things you often worry about.



According to Philippians 4:6-7, what is God's promise about our worries?

What are the specific conditions that we must meet for the promise to become a reality?

Write down one specific prayer request you have.

When we know God's "answers," our praying takes on a new dimension.

**The Bible comes alive when
it becomes our answer book!**



When we knock on God's door to ask for something:

- > Write down the request.
- > Believe that God will answer.
- > Ask specifically.
- > Claim God's promises.
- > Ask in Jesus' name. (Pray that He will give us what He wants us to have.)
- > Ask with unselfish motives.
- > Listen and watch for the answer.

Write

down one specific prayer request
you have.



Do you believe God will answer this prayer?

Is the request specific?

Look for a promise in the Bible that speaks to your request.

In the "Seven Days of Petition" section on page 107, study the promises. Does one of the promises apply to your request? Now, fill out the Prayer Action sheet with your specific request.

Pray your prayer and the promise in Jesus name!

Listen and watch this week for an answer. When God answers, write it down.

PRAYER ACTION



Petition: Write down one need you have in your life today.

To complete this session, memorize Matthew 7:7-8.



ASSIGNMENT

1. Continue daily Bible reading. Fill out a Bible Response sheet in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* each day.

Day 1: John 12:1-9

Day 2: John 12:10-22

Day 3: John 12:23-33

Day 4: John 12:34-43

Day 5: John 12:44-50

Day 6: John 13:1-17

Day 7: John 13:18-30

2. Study one passage each day from the "Seven Days of Petition" section (page 107), and complete the *Petition* section of your daily Prayer Action sheets in your *Time Alone with God Notebook*. Continue to fill out the *Praise, Thanksgiving, and Confession* sections.

On page 107 you will find a list of God's promises. On page 108 you will find a sample page entitled "Record of Petitions". Use one of the promises to write each of your petitions. By doing this in your *Time Alone with God Notebook* you will have a list of your requests based on God's promises as well as a record of God's answers to your prayers

3. Complete Session 10.

S E S S I O N 10



PRAY FOR
OTHERS

Spending time in intercession

Let's say a friend of yours at school has a severe drug problem. He wants to overcome it, but he just can't seem to quit. He has tried counseling, special medication, and "cold turkey" withdrawal, but nothing has worked so far. Now he comes to you. What difference can you make in his situation?

Or perhaps another friend is not married, but pregnant. She just found out and doesn't know what to do. She is certain that when she tells her parents, they will throw her out of the house. The baby's father wants nothing to do with her. What can you do to help?

Maybe the problem is closer to home. What if your parents fight all the time and are thinking of divorce? What can *you* do to help them?

At first glance, we might not think we could do anything in these situations. But we *can* call on God for help with our friends' or parents' problems. He is able to do something. The process of asking God's help on behalf of someone else is called intercession.

Hopefully, we have begun to recognize the power of prayer during the past several weeks. As a result, our relationship with God is growing stronger. Our *praise* and *thanksgiving* glorify and please God. *Confession* allows us to maintain a clean life. Our *petition* lets us receive God's provision for our needs. But *intercession* reaches beyond our one-to-one relationship with God and includes other people.



INTERCESSION — ANYTIME, ANYWHERE

As we pray for others, God releases His Holy Spirit into the world. The Holy Spirit can be anywhere instantly, and can penetrate even the toughest defense barriers.



2 Corinthians 10:3-5 tells us what we are able to do with the help of the Holy Spirit?

So don't give up. If you've tried to reach out to others, only to have them build "walls" around themselves, try intercession. The Holy Spirit will eventually break down those walls and overcome the other person's stubborn resistance. Many times our intercessory prayers can be the first important step that releases God's Spirit into someone's life.



Colossians 1:9-12 provides us with an example of intercessory prayer. Who wrote this passage, and to whom? (See Colossians 1:1-2.)

How often did the author intercede for these people?

What did he ask God to do for them?



INTERCESSION IN ACTION

Prayer is not dull and boring! God wants prayer in action! How can praying for others become one of the most exciting aspects of our relationship to Christ?



1 Pray with Confidence That God Will Answer

How can God's promise in 1 John 5:14-15 help us develop confidence?



2 Pray Persistently

We don't give up if we don't see immediate results. That's what Jesus said. How did He describe persistent prayer in Luke 11:5-8?

The person we pray for will sometimes have strong defenses that prevent him from responding right away. It may take persistent prayer to wear down those "strongholds."



3 Pray in Agreement with Other People

We can pray with friends or relatives who share our concern for the person we are praying for. When we read Matthew 18:18-20, what clues does Jesus give us about how to pray with other people?

4

Pray Knowing That No Problem Is Too Big for God

What is God's promise about handling big problems through us according to Ephesians 3:20-21?

Our prayers + God's power
= positive changes
in the lives of others

5

Pray Specifically

Ask the Lord for specific people and situations to pray for. Don't try to pray for everyone every day. Keep a list of people you are praying for.

What does Jesus want to do through your prayers according to John 14:12-14?

What do the words *whatever* and *anything* say about being specific in our prayers?

6

Pray Taking Authority over Satan

The battle is fierce! How can you keep Satan's destructive influence from impacting the person for whom you are praying? (James 4:7)

Concerning Satan's power, what has God promised? (1 John 4:4)



Pray Expecting Results

Don't be surprised to see God do great things. Read Acts 12:1-17.
What did the church ask God to do?

How did God answer their prayers?

How did they respond to His answer?

How do you think this incident affected the people's ability to pray in the future?



Who do you think God is leading you to pray for specifically?

How will you pray powerful, intercessory prayers for them?

Use the Prayer Action sheet every day to pray for people God brings to your mind. Follow this example.

PRAYER ACTION



INTERCESSION: Write the names of people you are praying for today and a phrase that expresses your prayer for each person.

PERSON

PRAYER

Alicia French

*Set her free from using
drugs. (2 Cor. 10:4-5)*

TO help you keep track of your prayers for others, use page 109.



Right now, take a few minutes to think about the people you need to pray for regularly (family members, close friends, people who need Jesus). Then fill out a sheet for each person in the *Time Alone with God Notebook*. Record God's answers to your prayers.

If you have trouble thinking of how to pray specifically for someone else, see the "Prayers You Can Pray for Others" sheet on page 110 to get started.

Complete this session by memorizing 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

ASSIGNMENT



1. Complete the *Intercession* section on your Prayer Action sheet and from now on complete the entire Prayer Action sheet each day in your *Time Alone with God Notebook*.

2. Continue your daily time alone with God, using the Bible reading and prayer guidelines in your *Time Alone with God Notebook*. Below is the breakdown for the rest of the Book of John.

John 13:31-38

John 16:23-28

John 19:23-30

John 14:1-7

John 16:29-33

John 19:31-37

John 14:8-14

John 17:1-8

John 19:38-42

John 14:15-21

John 17:9-19

John 20:1-10

John 14:22-31

John 17:20-26

John 20:11-18

John 15:1-8

John 18:1-14

John 20:19-23

John 15:9-16

John 18:15-27

John 20:24-31

John 15:17-21

John 18:28-40

John 21:1-14

John 15:22-27

John 19:1-12

John 21:15-19

John 16:1-11

John 19:13-22

John 21:20-25

John 16:12-22

FOR FUTURE TIME ALONE WITH GOD

After you have completed this session, continue to spend at least 15 minutes with God each day: 7 minutes in Bible study (using the verses above) and 8 minutes in prayer (using the ingredients of praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, and intercession). Every week extend your time by five minutes until you are spending 30 minutes, then 45 minutes, then an hour with God every day.

Order a new *Time Alone with God Notebook* to help you continue having focused, powerful times with God every day.
(Order at www.reach-out.org or call 1-800-473-9456.)

The next book in the *Moving Toward Maturity* series, entitled *Making Jesus Lord*, will take you to the next level in your growing relationship with Jesus.

PRAYER ACTION



Date 10/15

PRAISE: Write an expression of praise.

Lord, I praise You that You are the one who gives me strength. I can face today with joy and confidence in You. I praise and exalt You because Jesus is my salvation!

THANKSGIVING: Write down what you are most thankful for today.

Lord, I give You thanks that You will protect me as I face my angry friend.

CONFESSION: Write down any sin(s) you need to confess.

Lord, I confess that I do have impure thoughts. Specifically, I am struggling with lust.

PETITION: Write down one need you have in your life today.

Lord, I have a big test tomorrow. I ask You for the discipline to study and learn.

INTERCESSION: Write the names of people you are praying for today and a phrase that expresses your prayer for each person.

PERSON

PRAYER

Alicia French

Set her free from using drugs. (2 Cor. 10:4-5)

HOW TO STUDY A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION (Use with *Title* and *Key Verse* sections of your Bible Response Sheet.)

Pray first for the Holy Spirit's guidance, and then read the passage carefully. Read with an open mind, ready to receive and obey what God has to teach you.

INTERPRETATION (Use with the *Summary* section of your Bible Response Sheet.)

Step One -- Read the verses preceding and following the passage in order to understand the proper setting and context.

Step Two -- Ask yourself these questions about the passage: *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?* Then write down your insights in an outline.

Step Three -- Look up unfamiliar terms in a standard dictionary or a Bible dictionary.

APPLICATION (Use with the *Personal Application* section of your Bible Response Sheet.)

Step One -- Look for:

Promises to claim

Attitudes to change

Challenges to accept

Sins to confess

Commands to obey

Actions to take

Examples to follow

Skills to learn

Step Two -- Describe how the passage applies to your life by asking yourself these questions: "How can I make this passage personal?" "How can I make it practical?" "How can I make it measurable?" Be specific.

MEMORIZATION

Find a verse or passage of Scripture that speaks to you personally, and memorize it. During the *Moving Toward Maturity* series, concentrate on memorizing the verses as they are assigned. You will find specific steps to Scripture memory on page 101.

BIBLE RESPONSE



Date:

Passage

Title

Key Verse

Summary

Personal Application

HOW TO MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

READ THE PASSAGE SEVERAL TIMES. First read it silently, and then aloud.

UNDERSTAND THE PASSAGE.

- > Read it in the context of the passages around it.
- > Read the comments about the verse in a Bible commentary (for example, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*).
- > Write in a few words what the passage is about.

VISUALIZE THE PASSAGE. Use your imagination to picture the passage. For example, Matthew 5:1-12 is part of the "Sermon on the Mount." Picture yourself there on the mountain with Jesus. Then place each of these "Beatitudes" on the side of the mountain. Later, that picture will come to mind and help you recall these verses.

BREAK DOWN THE PASSAGE INTO NATURAL PHRASES. Learn the first phrase of the passage; then add the second. Continue adding phrases until you have memorized the entire passage.

LEARN THE REFERENCE AS PART OF THE PASSAGE. Say the reference, then the verse, and then repeat the reference again at the end. This step helps you fix the location of the verse in your mind, allowing you to turn to it immediately when you need it.

LEARN IT WORD PERFECT. As you are saying the passage over and over to yourself, continue to correct yourself until you've learned it exactly as it is written. You are already taking the time to learn it, so why not do it right! Learning it this way now will give you confidence to quote and use the passage later.

MEDITATE ON THE PASSAGE. As you think and pray about the passage, ask God to speak to you. When the passage becomes meaningful to you, then it will be much easier for you to remember.

REVIEW THE PASSAGE. Each day, review the Scripture passages you have already learned. If you review a passage every day for 30 days, it will be very difficult to forget.

PRAYER ACTION



Date

PRAISE: Write down one expression of praise.

THANKSGIVING: Write down what you are most thankful for today.

CONFESSION: Write down any sin(s) you need to confess.

PETITION: Write down one need you have in your life today.

INTERCESSION: Write the names of people you are praying for today and a phrase that expresses your prayer for each person.

PERSON

PRAYER

THIRTY DAYS OF PRAISE

Day 1: Psalm 8	Day 16: Psalm 104:1-23
Day 2: Psalm 23	Day 17: Psalm 104:24-35
Day 3: Psalm 34:1-3; 50:1-6	Day 18: Psalm 111
Day 4: Psalm 63:1-4; 66:1-7	Day 19: Psalm 112
Day 5: Psalm 67	Day 20: Psalm 113
Day 6: Psalm 84	Day 21: Psalm 134
Day 7: Psalm 86	Day 22: Psalm 135:1-7
Day 8: Psalm 90	Day 23: Psalm 138
Day 9: Psalm 91	Day 24: Psalm 139
Day 10: Psalm 92	Day 25: Psalm 145
Day 11: Psalm 93	Day 26: Psalm 146
Day 12: Psalm 95:1-7	Day 27: Psalm 147
Day 13: Psalm 96	Day 28: Psalm 148
Day 14: Psalm 100	Day 29: Psalm 149
Day 15: Psalm 103	Day 30: Psalm 150

SEVEN DAYS OF THANKSGIVING

Focus your thanks to the Lord in two areas each day: (1) Bible passages that describe His promises and gifts to you, and (2) your personal thanks for God's blessings in your daily life.

Day 1

Pray through 2 Peter 1:4 to express thanks to God.

Lord, thank You for Your great and precious promises that You have given to me that I might be part of Your divine nature.

I also thank You for:

Your amazing love,
letting me be in Your family,
making me really live, and
life at its most fantastic in Jesus.

Day 2

Pray through I John 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 to express thanks to God.

Father, I thank You for the blood of Your Son Jesus Christ that cleanses me from all sin and frees me from Satan's power.

I also thank You for:

Your patience,

Your comfort,

Your closeness to me,

Your disciplining of me, and

Your love inside me.

Day 3

Pray through I Peter 2:24 to express thanks to God.

Lord Jesus, I thank You that You bore my sins in Your body on the cross, so that I can die to sin and live righteously, and that by Your wounds I am healed.

I also thank You for:

the body of Christ (other believers),

the privilege of prayer,

my home, and

my parents.

Day 4

Pray through Ephesians 2:8-10 to express thanks to God.

Lord, I thank You that I am saved by grace through faith, and that it is Your free gift -- I don't have to work for it. But thank You that as Your new creation, I can live for You and help others.

I also thank You for:

my body,

my health,

my strength,

happy times,

sad times, and

in-between times.

Day 5

Pray through Psalm 91:11-14 to express thanks to God.

Lord, I thank You that You give Your angels charge over me to guard me in all my ways. They will steady me with their hands and protect me. You will deliver me because I love You.

I also thank You for:
opportunities for spiritual growth,
comfort when I'm depressed,
joy when I'm sad, and
courage when I'm scared.

Day 6

Pray through Ephesians 1:3-6 to express thanks to God.

Lord, thank You for choosing me to be adopted into Your family. Thank You for blessing me with all the good things You have stored up for those who belong to Christ

I also thank You for:
food,
clothes,
a place to live,
freedom to say what I think and feel, and
freedom not to say what I think and feel.

Day 7

Pray through 2 Corinthians 8:9 and 9:8 to express thanks to God.

Thank You, Lord, for paying my debt of sin that I could never have repaid. Thank You too for giving me the grace I need today to live for You.

I also thank You for:
saving me from selfishness,
saving me from pride, and
saving me from eternal separation from You.

THIRTY DAYS OF CONFESSION

Sins to Confess:

- Day 1: 2 Timothy 2:22. Do I have impure thoughts?
Day 2: Philippians 2:14-15. Do I complain or gripe?
Day 3: Ephesians 6:1-3. Do I honor my parents?
Day 4: Ephesians 4:31. Am I bitter toward anyone?
Day 5: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Am I careless with my body?
Day 6: Matthew 6:33. Do I seek what God wants first?
Day 7: Matthew 6:14. Do I have a bad attitude toward someone?
Day 8: 2 Timothy 2:22. Do I have impure motives?
Day 9: Colossians 3:9. Do I lie?
Day 10: Ephesians 6:1-3. Do I respect my parents?
Day 11: Ephesians 4:31. Is there anger in my life?
Day 12: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Do I have bad habits?
Day 13: Matthew 6:33. Is God the most important person in my life?
Day 14: Matthew 6:14. Am I holding a grudge?
Day 15: 2 Timothy 2:22. Are my thoughts pure toward the opposite sex?
Day 16: Philippians 2:14-15. Do I have a critical attitude?
Day 17: Colossians 3:9. Do I steal?
Day 18: Ephesians 4:31. Do I talk about others behind their backs?
Day 19: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Am I lazy?
Day 20: Matthew 6:33. Have I given God everything in my life?
Day 21: Matthew 6:14. Do I have a wrong relationship with someone?
Day 22: Colossians 3:9. Do I cheat in school?
Day 23: Ephesians 6:1-3. Do I have problems with authority?
Day 24: Ephesians 4:31. Am I jealous of anyone?
Day 25: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. Do I eat too much?
Day 26: Matthew 6:33. Am I trusting God with my life?
Day 27: Matthew 6:14. Is there anyone I resent?
Day 28: Philippians 2:14-15. Does my attitude honor God?
Day 29: Ephesians 6:1-3. Am I rebellious?
Day 30: Ephesians 4:31. Do I argue with other people?

These sins to confess will help you through your first 30 days of confession. Follow the passage that corresponds to that day of the month. Apply that passage to a sin you need to confess.

SEVEN DAYS OF PETITION

Focus your petitions on: (1) Bible passages that describe what God wants for you, and (2) your personal requests for God to supply your needs.

Day 1 (Read Galatians 2:20.) "Jesus, help me to live as someone who is dead to my own selfish desires. Take charge of my body, my mind, and my emotions. Live Your life in me today."

Other needs: _____

Day 2 (Read Galatians 5:22-23) "Jesus, please help me express these qualities to other people."

Other needs: _____

Day 3 (Read Ephesians 5:18) "Jesus, I claim the filling of Your Spirit. Fill me now. I pray for all that comes from Your Spirit: courage, power, wisdom, sexual purity, boldness, compassion, enthusiasm, honesty, and openness."

Other needs: _____

Day 4 (Read I Corinthians 12:4-6.) "Lord, help me to know my spiritual gift(s) and use it for Your glory."

Other needs: _____

Day 5 (Read Ephesians 6:10-17.) "Jesus, it's tough to be a Christian in this world. The pressure gets heavy at times. I ask for Your strength and protection. I put on Your armor: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit -- the Word of God."

Other needs: _____

Day 6 (Read Isaiah 41:10.) "Lord, sometimes I am afraid. But I know I don't have to remain scared because You are my help and my strength. Help me today to overcome fear by trusting in You."

Other needs: _____

Day 7 (Read Acts 1:8.) "Jesus, I want to be a witness for You to my friends. Give me the power and courage to be Your witness today."

Other needs: _____

PRAYERS YOU CAN PRAY FOR OTHERS

Look at these prayers of the Apostle Paul. They will help you know how to pray for other people. In fact, pray these specific prayers for them.

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ -- to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge -- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19).

"We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3).



BIBLE MEMORY VERSES

Each memory verse on these cards is printed in the *New International Version (NIV)*. The verses correspond with the Bible studies in this book.

ALWAYS CARRY THESE VERSES WITH YOU.

Use what helps you most:

- > Put a rubber band around them.
- > Carry them in an envelope.
- > Place them in your wallet or pocketbook.
- > Put them on the visor of your car.
- > Carry them in your Bible.
- > Daily review each verse you've learned.
- > Have someone check your progress each week.
- > Apply each verse to your daily life.

1. MEETING GOD Mark 1:35

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed. (NIV)

2. GROWING CLOSER 2 Tim. 3:16

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. (NIV)

3. BIBLE STUDY Joshua 1:8

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (NIV)

4. BIBLE MEMORY Ps. 119:9-11

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word. I seek You with all my heart; do not let me stray from Your commands. I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You. (NIV)

5. PRAYER John 15:7

If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. (NIV)

6. PRAISE Psalm 146:1-2

Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. (NIV)

7. THANKSGIVING 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (NIV)

8. CONFESSION 1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (NIV)

9. PETITION Matthew 7:7-8

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. (NIV)

10. INTERCESSION 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (NIV)

Barry St. Clair desires to influence as many teenagers as possible to follow Christ. As the president of Reach Out Youth Solutions, he speaks to thousands of students each year and has written more than 20 books, including the Moving Toward Maturity series. Barry travels all over the world equipping youth leaders, parents and students. Through his leadership, thousands of churches have implemented strategies for Jesus-focused youth ministry. Barry played on the #3 basketball team in the country and has run the Boston Marathon. He and his wife, Lawanna, have eight children and live in Atlanta, Georgia.



MOVING TOWARD MATURITY SERIES OVER 1,000,000 BOOKS IN PRINT!

How can you deepen your relationship with Jesus? Time! Just like all other relationships, you get to know Jesus intimately when you spend time with Him. Jesus wants to draw near to you as you draw near to Him! This book will help you spend time alone with God every day as you:

- Study the Bible
- Memorize Scripture
- Enjoy prayer
- Celebrate praise
- Give thanks
- Confess your sins
- Pray for yourself
- Pray for other people

Other books in the Moving Toward Maturity series are:

- *Getting Started*
- *Following Jesus*
- *Making Jesus Lord*
- *Giving Away Your Faith*
- *Influencing Your World*
- *Time Alone with God Notebook*
- *Leader's Guide*