



SESSION 3 — DEVOTIONS: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT ANYWAY?

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Before we just dive into the subject let's make sure we have some alignment on exactly what we are talking about. Many new Christians view the Christian life as a seemingly endless list of do's and don'ts; they often add devotions to that list of required "do's" instead of realizing that it is actually a privilege that we get to engage in!

- What are some of the other names or phrases we might use for this?
- As you reflect on those names, what do they imply?
- What does the word "**devotion**" mean anyway?
- Do you have a SPIRITUAL HABIT of DEVOTIONS that accurately reflects the idea of **devotion**?

LEGACY — WHAT HAS IT BEEN? WHAT WILL IT BE?

As we study the Bible, we are constantly given stories of how God has acted in history. What we discover in reading God's word is that He consistently interacts with individuals. That should amaze us! God interacted with us at an individual level to draw us to Himself for salvation and the death of Christ made the presence of God available to every Christian.

What has your legacy of devotions been up until today?

BIRTH

Age 0-12 (12 years born but not born again)

Born of
GOD

Age 12-27 (15 more years w/o SPIRITUAL HABIT)



Age 27-38+ (27 wasted / 11 growing in His Word)

Do you ever reflect on what your legacy of sought-out engagement with Him has been in the past? Simply reflecting on God's working in your life and honestly assessing where you are with this spiritual habit can be both a blessing and a conviction.

My personal legacy with this spiritual habit is filled with lost opportunities, failed attempts and misplaced priorities. Praise the Lord that isn't the end of my story and it doesn't have to be for you either. No matter where you are with this spiritual habit right now in your life, I'd ask you to reflect on your past but also to focus on your future. What will your legacy of devotions be?

5 LESSONS TO LEARN FROM

1. God's Plan For Christian Growth is Feeding on His Words!

God's word sets the expectation that we grow!

- II Peter 3:18 "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

As you read God's word you will continually see the teaching that God's word is to be our Spiritual Nourishment. There is an ongoing comparison to our physical bodies needing physical food and to our spiritual life also needing food for growth.

- Jesus** — John 4:34 "My food is to do the will of him who sent me."
- Peter** — I Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby."

- c. **Moses** – Deuteronomy 8:3 “Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”
- d. **Job** – Job 23:12 “I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my portion of food.”
- e. **Jeremiah** – Jeremiah 15:16 “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your word became to me a joy and the delight of my heart.”

l. **God Honors a Heart That Desires to Grow.**

- James 4:8 “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.”
- Philippians 2:13 “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”
- a. To will – God works in us to change our desires.
- b. To do – God works in us to change our actions/habits.

Psalm 119:18

Open thou mine eyes **THAT** I may behold wonderful things out of Thy law.

l. **Unconfessed Sin Hinders Devotional Effectiveness.**

As you develop this SPIRITUAL HABIT, you’ll be wise to understand that holding sin in your heart will negatively impact the effectiveness of devotional time.

- Psalm 32 “When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long.”
- Matt 5:8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”
- Psalm 66:18 – “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”

l. **God’s Word Gives Us Directions We Need.**

As men, we’ve all heard the illustration about how our natural habit is to avoid asking for directions. The illustration is used so often

because it is so true. The reality is that it is our PRIDE that rises up in us and puts itself on display when we act this way. The honest truth is that we absolutely need the knowledge of God’s word and the wisdom He provides us if we will just ask.

- James 1:5 “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.
- Psalm 119:105 “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”

5. **God Promises Blessings from Meditation on His Word.**

JOSHUA 1:8

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but **thou shalt meditate therein day and night**, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for **THEN thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and THEN thou shalt have good success.**”

- a. **God has planned for and desires to give us blessings through His word.**
 - WHAT is the negative we are to avoid?
 - WHAT is the positive we are to engage in?
 - WHAT is the first reason we should engage in that?
 - WHAT is the ultimate result He promises?

Take Note: There is a contingent responsibility placed on us to receive that blessing.

Again, God clearly makes HIS blessings available to us as believers; but just like when He spoke to Joshua, He again provides an opportunity to receive these blessings. These blessings are available to each of us as believers, but we must follow his prescribed path!

- Don't – follow the counsel of the world.
- Do – delight in and meditate on God's word.

b. Both verses indicate a need for meditation – more than mere reading!

Satan would be happy to see Christians get up every day, do some reading, check off their spiritual checklist of time with God and never ever put to memory or application what they've just read. Scripture exhorts us toward MEDITATION which is the process of mulling over and actually applying what we read.

- “Repetition is the mother of all learning.”
- “It is the look that saves, but the stare/gaze that sanctifies.”

Suggestions

- Option 1: Takeaway for the Day
- Option 2: Study book that includes Q&A
- Option 3: Accountability & Discussion Partner
- Option 4: Who/What/When/Where/Why/ What now for me?
- Option 5: Light Bulb (Big Idea); Question Mark (What do I need to go back and study more b/c I didn't understand or I need to explore further?); Arrow (What truth did I discover that I need to live by?)

We all need to make sure that our SPIRITUAL HABIT of devotions drives toward meditation and application in our own personal lives.

5 LESSONS TO LEARN FROM

While there is no exact formula for devotions that will work for every person, there absolutely are specific practical steps we should consider to increase the effectiveness of our devotional time.

1. Determine a Time.

- When is it best for me?

2. Determine a Place.

- Where is the best place for me?

3. Determine a Time Frame.

- What is the right length for now?

4. Consider a consistent Structure.

- How will I allocate this time?

- I have found it helpful to open with David's prayer of Psalm 119:18 “Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

5. Develop a Plan.

- What am I going to be reading?

6. Make it Meditational.

- What process will I use to get to meditation?

7. Commit to your plan and consider Accountability.

- Could I benefit from accountability?
- Who will I go to for mutual accountability?

8. Ensure it is Effective or change it up.

- Is my process effective right now?
- What have I learned that will help me?

Psalm 34:8

O taste and see that the Lord is good.