

## LeaderLesson 12: The Importance of Time with God

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*Let us then with confidence draw near to the Throne of Grace,  
that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* Hebrews 4:16

As we consider the necessity of obedience in the life of the Christian leader, we must include a discussion of the time we spend alone with God, the quiet time we know we need, but too often neglect. But, before you stop reading because you think this article will lambast you for not being spiritual enough, that is not the purpose of this LeaderLesson. My purpose here is to encourage you to pause and take a fresh look at how important time we can personally set aside to spend with God is, and some ways we can pursue that time so that our obedience flows from our relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We will also learn from Andrew Murray's "The Importance of the Morning Watch" in this LeaderLesson.

What causes us to keep a morning watch? What is the motivating principle behind a quiet time with God? If we do it simply as our Christian duty, it will soon become a burden. Or, if our purpose is our own happiness and safety, that will not supply the incentive to make this time commitment attractive. Only one thing will suffice to keep us faithful in communing with God – **a sincere desire for fellowship with Him**. To have more of God, to know Him better, to receive from Him the comfort of His love and strength, to have our life filled with His – this is why we eagerly enter our closet and shut the door to be alone with Him.

It was a few years ago, when on a personal retreat in the mountains, God gave me a fresh longing for more time with Him. I usually spent time with the Lord in the mornings, but often it was not much time. When I spent an hour with God in Scripture reading, silence, and prayer, I was refreshed and revived. So, remembering this on my retreat, I made a fresh commitment to take at least one morning each week when I would get up earlier than usual and go to my office alone for time with God. I chose Wednesday mornings for this experiment. It was amazing that once I began that new habit of two hours with the Lord before the work day began, Wednesday morning became the one I looked forward to most each week.

It is in the place of quiet where we are alone with God that our spiritual life is both tested and strengthened. There is the battlefield where it is decided every day whether God will have all of us and whether our life will be one of absolute obedience. If we truly conquer there, committing ourselves into the hands of our Lord and finding refuge in Him, the victory during the day is certain.

The first lesson is this: ***the presence of God is of supreme importance***. To meet with God, to yield ourselves to His will, to have Him tell us His desires for the day and lay His hand upon us – this is what we can expect from our time with Him, what we come to long for and delight in. Reading and meditating on God's Word is part of what needs to occupy this time.

Another lesson that cannot be repeated too often is that it is ***only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit that we arrive at the true meaning of God's Word***. Only by the Spirit will the Word penetrate our inner life and work in us. The Father who gave us His Word has given us the Holy Spirit within to interpret and appropriate that Word. The Father wants us to be taught by the Spirit.

Third, always ***study God's Word with an attitude of obedience***, with unreserved surrender to obey God's will. Never read the Scriptures concerning you without honestly yielding yourself to obey it at once, asking for the grace to do so. How unfortunate it is when we think we are doing a good thing to read the Word without any conscious effort to obey it. Make it a habit to say to God: *Lord, whatever I know to be Your will, I will obey it at once.*

What power the time with God provides in the life of the one who makes a determined resolve to meet with God, to renew the surrender to obedience, to wait humbly and patiently on the Holy Spirit to teach. If we can pray for ourselves, we can become an intercessor for others. What should our praying include?

First and foremost, secure the presence of God. Do not be content with anything less than sensing His nearness, knowing that He is with you. In our Christian walk, we should want nothing so much as more of God – His love, His will, His holiness, His power working in us for others. There is no way to obtain this except by close personal communion. And there seems to be no better time for practicing this than in the morning. The superficiality of our Christian service comes from having so little real contact with God. Give Him time alone so that He might reveal Himself to you.

After sensing His presence, let the renewal of your surrender to obedience for that day be a significant part of your time with the Lord. Let your confession be clear – doing away with everything that grieves God. Pray for grace for a closer walk with Him. Let obedience be your determined resolve and controlling principle. Let your prayer be truly a morning sacrifice, placing yourself as a living offering on the altar of the Lord. The measure of your surrender to full obedience will be the measure of your confidence toward God.

True prayer and fellowship with God cannot be one-sided. We must learn to wait in His presence, waiting to hear His response. This is the work of the Holy Spirit – He is the voice of God to us. To hear His voice, we need the quiet faith that trust in God, the quiet heart that bows in humility before God and allows Him to be the answer to everything we ask. If we are not hearing from Him, how will we know what He would have us do in the day that lies ahead? If we are not hearing from Him, how will we know what He wants us to know about those we serve, the mission field where we labor, the neighbors He would have us reach for Christ? Milton Hollifield told of the early days of his leadership of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and how at a prayer conference, he and Henry Blackaby were visiting. As they talked, Henry asked, “Milton, what is God saying to you about North Carolina?” It occurred to Milton that he did not know – he had not been listening for that word from the Lord. He quickly corrected his error, and now listens for what God wants to tell him about the place where he serves. Are you listening for what God is saying to you about your church or your community? If not, why not? We must stop long enough to listen for the word of the Lord to us.

Then, in the ministry of prayer we have the opportunity to pray for others, to intercede, to stand in the gap through prayer for those in need. We are a royal priesthood. Let intercession create in us a longing for the souls of those around us, a bearing of the burden of their sin and need, a pleading for the growth of God’s kingdom, laboring in prayer for definite purposes to be realized. When we begin the day with this kind of intercession, the day becomes a time when we watch for what God will do in answer to our prayers for others, and join Him in the work of reaching those souls for His glory and their good. Through intercession, a believer rises to his true nobility in the power of imparting life and blessing. It is through intercession that we will see an increase of the power of God in the church and its work among those who need to know Jesus.

God has called us to live in the supernatural. Allow your devotional time each day to be as the open gate of heaven through which light and power stream into your waiting heart, and from which you go out to walk with God all day long.

*Before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea;  
A great High Priest whose name is Love, who ever lives and pleads for me.  
My name is graven on His hands, My name is written on His heart.  
I know that while in heaven He stands no tongue can bid me thence depart,  
No tongue can bid me thence depart.*

*Behold Him there, the risen Lamb, My perfect spotless righteousness,  
The great unchangeable I AM, the King of glory and of grace.  
One with Himself I cannot die; My soul is purchased by His blood.  
My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ my Savior and my God,  
With Christ my Savior and my God.*

(“Before the Throne of God Above” by Vikki Cook & Charitie Lees Bancroft, stanzas 1 & 3.)

[Portions adapted from *A Life of Obedience* by Andrew Murray, chapter 4.]

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