

HOW TO

have a quiet time

Martin Luther wrote that he “could not get on without spending three hours daily in prayer”. John Wesley's practice was to start every day with at least two hours of prayer, from as early as 4am. Jesus himself is recorded as having regularly set aside time to pray and be quiet before God (Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16). Countless Christians have found that a regular time of prayer and Scripture reading is one of the cornerstones of a life of faithful discipleship, a means of nurturing relationship with God, learning to love the Scriptures and being formed by silence and prayer.

You've probably also recognised just how important a regular quiet time is. But you probably also have experienced how difficult it is to consistently maintain the discipline.

What exactly is a quiet time?

A quiet time is simply time set aside to be alone with God in prayer, usually with a Bible and possibly a journal or notebook. Ideally this will happen at a time and in a place where it is possible to be quiet and not be interrupted.

Should I get up at 4am every day?

Mornings are ideal (but not necessarily at 4am – start slowly!) – it is helpful to start the day focused on God (Luther said that on especially busy days when he had more to get through than usual, he would get up earlier so that he could spend longer in prayer!) Realistically though, not all of us are morning people – some of us only really wake up an hour after our first cup of coffee. If mornings are impossible (and this may be especially true when your kids are very young) find another time when you can be alone in quiet.

What should I do during a quiet time?

1. Start by simply being quiet. You'll find that it takes several minutes, maybe longer, of sitting in silence for all of the noise and stress and restlessness in us to dissipate. This is called *centring* and there are helpful resources available for approaches to becoming still and centred on God.
2. Precisely what form your quiet time takes is up to you – there are no rules here! Spend time in prayer – speaking to God (experiment with different kinds of prayer: thanksgiving, confession, interceding for others, asking for yourself). Spend time reading the Bible – following readings set in a daily devotional book, or using a lectionary, or working through a book of the Bible systematically. Get yourself a journal or notebook to write down some thoughts. If you're concerned about someone finding and reading it, use cryptic abbreviations if need be!

How do I keep it up every day?

1. Recognise that, like any discipline, there will be plenty of days when you don't feel like doing it.
2. Just like exercising with someone else helps to motivate us (we are more likely to arrive at the gym if someone is going to be waiting there for us) so it is helpful to do this in partnership with someone or a group. Hold each other accountable – send reminders, encouragements.
3. Don't be discouraged or too hard on yourself when you fail – you're in very good company! But it's worth keeping at, so pick yourself up, and start again.

Some useful resources

1. Make sure you have a readable Bible in a contemporary translation (avoid thee's and thou's).
2. Devotional booklets are a helpful start (try the Upper Room, or Faith for Daily Living for starters, but also look to supplement what they give with other Scripture reading if need be). Visit our bookshop for more ideas.
3. Join our Facebook page to be part of a group conversation as we tackle this together.