

## **“Day with the Lord”: Spending Extended Time with the Lord**

### **Laurie Menefee Besonen**

To begin with, I would like to say that the following outline is just one suggested way to spend extended time with the Lord. I have been using this format regularly for the last seven years and it never gets old for me. Using these practices has allowed me to have a sweet, healing, and cleansing time with the Lord. Like all new things, trying it and then making adaptations that fit who you are and how you most enjoy connecting with the Lord will make it a useful tool versus another assignment.

The day before you take extended time with the Lord, I would suggest that you pray for direction. At times I have planned to use this very format and the Lord has clearly lead me to focus my attention in another way. Remember the goal of the day is to cultivate intimacy with the Lord, since He initiated relationship with you; He is able to help you cultivate it in a meaningful way.

Let me begin with a few disclaimers...

- The heart of this material came from a taped class on Spiritual Discernment by Gordon Smith, a professor at Regent College in Vancouver. He also wrote a book entitled *Listening to God in Times of Choice*. Although I want to give him appropriate credit, there are also ways in which I have adapted the material and added to it. Therefore, I don't want to “blame” him for anything that does not make sense.
- Since the ideas of spending a day with the Lord are in the context of a broader teaching on discernment, I have included the “why's” behind each part – this is not to make it seem more complicated – but for some of us, understanding the “why's” behind the structure is a primary need. So, I have distilled to actual practices for a day with the Lord at the end on a summary page. Feel free to skip right to that if you would like the outline form only.
- As a matter of fact the practices he suggests are so simple that you might wonder why they are being offered. I'm not sure why but the combination has been refreshing to me.
- Enjoy! Remember, there is nothing “magical” about this format – ask the Lord to lead you to how he would want you to spend time with him.

Extended prayer and reflection – spend a day or longer with the Lord.

- We desperately need time and space to reflect – noting the difference between introspection and healthy self-reflection.

“When we move beyond the busyness and superficiality of our lives and become men and women of prayer and reflection, we can truly know ourselves and attend to the impressions and promptings of God. For God is working in us, shaping us through our joys and sorrows. But we cannot respond to the inner work of God

unless we learn how to spot, be silent, pray, think and reflect on this inner work. And reflection, like prayer, is fostered in quiet, when we process what is happening in our lives and attend to our inner reactions and responses to these events” (Smith, pg. 53).

- Find a space that is conducive to prayer and listening: you *may* feel like changing your posture before God (some posture or responsiveness like kneeling, arms raised, face to floor, etc.) while praying which is not always socially acceptable in a Barnes and Noble (though the coffee is hard to beat).
- It is helpful to be well rested (even if it is just the night before...).

### **Suggested structure – four parts:**

#### **1. Thanksgiving**

Here the grace we seek is the assurance of God’s love. It is important to know you are loved; that God in His faithfulness desires to be good to you and actually has been good to you.

- Thanksgiving is a way to renew perspective
- Phil.4: 6-7 tells us that prayer *with thanksgiving* yields peace
- 1 Thess. 16 – 18: “Be joyful always; pray continually; *give thanks in all circumstances*, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

#### **Exercise:**

Write down 10 things you are grateful for.

Take a walk.

Write down 10 more things.

Sing a hymn.

Write down 10 more things.

These can be “big” or “small” things. I write whatever comes to my mind without much of a filter so it ends up looking something like this: “*Thank you, Lord, for the wonderful deals that both Esther and I continually find while shopping; thank you for my talk with my brother, Bruce, about concerns in our family; thank you for being my refuge at all times, Lord – for your constant availability with open arms; thank you for this great cup of coffee...*”

This exercise breaks up the tendency toward self-pity and complaining – the enemy tempts us and cultivating gratitude helps us to see clearly and hear clearly.

Take a break.

#### **2. Ask yourself: “How am I *really* doing...?”**

Here the grace we seek is to see ourselves as God sees us.

- Need to remember Romans 8:1 – “There is no condemnation!”

- “God never sheds light on our weaknesses or short comings for the sake of condemnation. God makes us aware of hindrances so He can set us free!” (Beth Moore)
- The enemy lies to us about this and encourages us to stay locked up in the dark and not self-aware.
- “The devout want nothing hidden, no “secret faults” (Ps. 19:12; cf. 139:23-24) and they indeed find it a comfort to be fully known (Ps. 38:9, 139:12,15; Is. 40:27-31).
- During this section, we are asking God to “show us our anxious thoughts” (Ps. 139:23-24). We are not “navel gazing” but asking God to “search us and know our hearts.”

It is important to know our own state of emotional health. Our fear is often that if we focus on what we are feeling it will then take over and control us. It has been my experience, as well as the counseling advice from others, that the opposite is actually true.

The aim is not to get in touch with our feelings but to discern what is underneath them. Feelings often point to unresolved issues that affect us in powerful, often destructive ways *because* they go unacknowledged. The following exercise is not geared to give our emotions power over our spiritual perspective. Instead its aim is to bring our feelings from the “unknown” to the “known” as we sit with the Lord and ask in a forthright way whether there is anything behind them that we might need to be aware of.

Please note that the following list is not suggesting that there is inherently sin in our emotional responses. Rather that what affects us deeply ought to be filtered in a conscious way with the Lord so that we open ourselves to his comfort, strength, forgiveness, healing, etc.

**Exercise: {choose one of the following}**

A. Prayerfully ask several or all of these questions:

- What is amiss in my life as God sees it?
- What unresolved emotions toward God, self or others come to mind that need to be brought before God?
- How have I sinned in thought, word, and deed in what I’ve done and not done?
- What have I neglected or postponed and what are the reasons behind my lack of activity in this area or toward this person?

OR

B. Prayerfully ask these 4 questions:

*(By the way, don't be surprised if this becomes the longest section of the day. Giving the Spirit time to filter has been a joyful and refreshing experience for me using the following method.)*

- 1) What are the **anxieties** that are tying up my heart? What fears? Write these down – give each back to the Lord when they feel overwhelming by saying, “This anxiety is too big for me Lord, will you carry it?”
- 2) Where am I experiencing **anger**? Where have people wronged me? What have they said or done or not said and not done?

It is important to take the time to realize where you have anger. God's Spirit may lead you to forgive someone or toward the realization that you need to take some steps to resolve the cause of the anger on your behalf or on behalf of someone else.

- 3) Where have I experienced **significant loss**? Where am I mourning and in grief?
- 4) Where have I been experiencing **discouragement**? Where are pockets of sadness? Where are there places where we feel defeated?

Break – eat a hearty lunch

### 3. Word of God

The grace we seek here is to be shaped by the Word; the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword...Heb. 4:12

“Let the word of God dwell in you richly” - Col. 3: 16

#### **Exercise:**

You may want to read the word in a different fashion than you might usually do. One idea that I have tried is to read a book four times – ex. Phil, Col. etc. (I usually read in several versions including a paraphrase like *The Message*.) Each time I read it through, I journal whatever verses seem to “pop out of the page.” Then after reading it through several times, I review the verses that stood out. I ask the Lord to help me hear if he is saying something to me with the verses that I've “noticed” in a different way while reading. Then I look for any kind of theme that they may indicate. Or maybe several things hit me that relate to the reflection time in section #2.

Coffee or power nap time.

#### 4. Time of rededication

Here we are asking for the grace to submit our lives fully to God and for his purposes in the world. Our desire is to insure we have a heart is fully yielded to him.

##### **Exercise: {choose from one of the 4 suggestions}**

- A. Ask self – Where does my ultimate loyalty lie?  
Ask the question – Whom do I serve?  
What are my fundamental motivations?
  - Love of pleasure or monetary gain.
  - Love of honor or recognition.
  - Love of power and influence.
  
- B. Read John 21 – meditate on it.  
(In this passage Jesus asks Peter about do you love me? and calls Peter to follow him no matter what.)  
What do you cherish?
  
- C. Matt. 6:33 – seek 1<sup>st</sup> His Kingdom.  
Ask: What do I long for? Ps. 37
  
- D. Looking at the end of your life and asking what do you want to stand for?

Silence and writing are two important things in the day.

##### **Silence:**

- Make sure that you weave silence into the 4 sections of the day to insure that you are listening to God.
- Something I'm learning is to sit in silence before the Lord in order to enjoy his presence
- It is not easy to discipline my mind and to still my soul.
- An exercise in grow in this discipline is to sit in silence and when your mind gets distracted write it down and then refocus by meditating on short phrases on God's character – ex. Rev. 4 & 5 “You are worthy; You are Holy.”

**Note:** There might be times that God chooses to be more silent than we would like him to be during the day but He will always show you Himself. Often what I hear is on the general side ‘rest my child’ ‘Have faith’, ‘Follow Me’ ...etc. Most of all, God probably wants to be enjoyed during our times with him.

##### **Writing:**

- At regular times of the day you may want to record your thoughts, questions, impressions, and emotions.
- Henry Blackabee says something like – the Word of God begs a response so we need to take note of what God is bringing to our mind so that we can apply it.

## Summary of Day with the Lord

### 1. Thanksgiving

Here the grace we seek is the assurance of God's love. It is important to know you are loved; that God in His faithfulness desires to be good to you and has been good to you. Thanksgiving is a way to renew perspective – Phil.4: 6-7 – prayer *with thanksgiving* yields peace.

Write down 10 things you are grateful for

Take a walk

Write down 10 more things

Sing a hymn

Write down 10 more things

Take break

### 2. Ask yourself: “How am I *really* doing...?”

Here the grace we seek is to see ourselves as God sees us.

Reflect on your current emotional “weather” and what is behind your feelings (see suggestion questions to process above).

Break for lunch

### 3. Word of God

The grace we seek here is to be shaped by the word; the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword...Heb. 4:12.

Nap or walk or have a beverage of choice

### 4. Time of rededication

Here we are asking for the grace to submit our lives fully to God and for his purposes in the world. Our desire is to insure we have a heart that is fully surrendered to His Holy Spirit.