

We fill our time, our minds, and ultimately our hearts with all but Him. Then we wonder why we're less responsive to Him than we would like and more responsive to the things of this world!

We should apply ourselves persistently both in prayer time and out to giving Him our attention, to meditating on Him, seeking for Him, longing after Him, seeing the center of our focus moved from ourselves and things of time and space to Him and things spiritual and eternal. But, by His enabling, it should be in quiet confidence in Him and His life in us that we give ourselves to seeking Him. When we find ourselves struggling forcibly by our independent selves to seek Him, we can back off, return to our quiet rest in Him, and let His almighty life in us take up the task.

### **Replacing Bad Attitudes**

Whenever our attention turns to ourselves in prayer, we need to seek to be entirely open and honest with God about ourselves. As we do, we may realize our need of Him, our helplessness without Him, and the depravity of our hearts. Confession, repentance, and restitution will often result spontaneously. Though we may scarcely sense it to be so, His love will begin flowing out from us to Him and others.

Our self-centeredness and resistance to God, the circumstances He permits in our lives, or His will for us effectively divert the attention of the longing heart from the object of our love. It's this that needs to be abandoned as the appalling deterrent to true prayer communion with God in love that it is.

### **Our Awful Independent Spirits**

This independent spirit may show up not only as sin and active resistance to God but as a negative reaction to people and difficult circumstances. This spirit has many different appearances, such as: a desire to remain in charge of our own circumstances, a mind or heart full of strife instead of peace, a preoccupation with the material world, or a long list of worries and concerns demanding our attention. It may even evidence itself as a barrage of

needs with which we bombard God that all sound very right, even necessary and spiritual, but which are really concerns never rested with the Lord, submitted to His will, or entrusted to His care.

However it shows itself, this independent spirit is idolatry that effectively excludes primary attention to God even from our prayer time. Remember, the low, low doorway into God's presence is to forsake all for Him and to Him. Let go of everything. Relinquish all to Him. Maintain no control over anything. Accept no primary responsibility for anything. Retain no ultimate ownership of anything. Tear down the idols. Have no real hope and no great need but Him. Just to have God in charge of all things for you is enough.

### **Expect Change**

Each prayer time must be submitted to God's sovereign direction that His will may be done in it. We need to learn increasingly to accept what He sends our way in each time with Him without objection. Otherwise, we lose His peace, His joy, and His blessing.

At times we may seek Him earnestly, long after Him, want Him to be our all, eagerly pursue Him as the one great object and hope of our lives. At times we may worship, praise, and adore Him. Sometimes we may long to be able to love Him as we want to do. We may at one point want just to seek His honor and glory. At another we may want to wait on Him, look to Him quietly, meekly, attentively, receptively, dependently, and expectantly. At still another we may want to rest in Him in love, resignation, and surrender.

As we look back, we may see that some of our seeking the Lord was quite tainted with proud flesh and its self-righteousness. We may wish so much that it had been otherwise. Still, isn't it better to risk this than never to begin? In fact, if we aren't content to start here, how could we ever start?

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By: Pastor Ron Marr

*"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where there is no water; so I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus will I bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You upon my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. My soul follows close behind You: Your right hand upholds me."*

Psalm 63:1-8

As David discovered, God Himself needs to be the center and focus of our attention. Nothing else can take His place, not even prayer or communion with Him can be allowed to replace Him as our life-focus.

But tell me, will you please, how is the Lord to become increasingly real to us if not by some kind of communion with Him? How is He to get more and more of our attention and affection? Tell me, why do so many resist the idea that regular, consistent, extensive prayer communion with God is necessary if they're to grow in the Lord?

### **Twisted Out of Shape**

For many of God's people, the real reason is that they have let their attention to that supplanting triumvirate god of this age continue to replace the loving attention due the triune God. We want to hold onto the things of this life, its possessions, pleasures and passions, its manners and methods, its

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hopes and helps.

We don't want to endure the revelation of our sin and sickness that is sure to come when our attention is really given to God. We don't care to hear the persistent demands of a God-awakened conscience that we repent and turn from our continuing rebellion. We don't want to spend our time with the God who can't even look on sin, especially not when there's so much sinful rebellion standing between us and Him that is unrepented of, unforsaken, and unforgiven.

We don't want to listen to the divine insistence that we find the eternal Creator and Sustainer of all things totally worthy of our trust. We don't want to believe He's entirely capable of caring for all our needs without our worry or interference.

We want to be able to complain at His management of our affairs. We want somehow to find an excuse for trying to get along without Him in everyday practice, even while professing Him as Lord and Master.

## **Don't Ask Too Much**

We may be willing to admit the importance of prayer provided it can be done on the fly. We may even allow for the desirability of an established regular time of daily devotions provided it's a few quick moments that we can spend asking God to get us out of our problems and supply our needs and wants, after which we might list a few quick requests for others.

Now, we're quite willing to spend years preparing for a vocation. We'll invest seemingly endless hours learning to drive a car, operate a computer, get a degree we may not even need or use, or obtain a sales license of some kind. Once having obtained the goal, if we do really value our achievement, we recognize the need of continuing to exercise or improve our new-found skills.

Meanwhile, when it comes to spiritual concerns, we're not willing to give our loving God the time and attention a god deserves of his devotees, a master of his servants, a king of his subjects.

## **Taking God for Granted**

We know a friendship has to be constantly cultivated, or it will die a natural death. We're well aware that historically engaged couples have spent a lot of time together laying a solid foundation for their developing relationship. We know the importance of husbands and wives enjoying pleasant times alone together and the danger posed to the relationship where this isn't happening.

Yet we often act as though our love relationship with the Lord is just supposed to grow and develop automatically, without giving it or Him any special attention. We act as though we are to grow in His grace and have His victory over sin without willing, responsive participation on our part.

Can we draw close to the heart of God while we're ignoring Him, ignoring that infinitely perfect Person who offers us everything we can ever need, ignoring Him in favor of the garbage and husks of this world?

Dear Lord, forgive us.

## **Believe It!**

The power of influence can't be measured. You will become like the person you are much with. The more you admire, respect, and love that person, the more you'll become like him.

So it is with being much with Christ. To start on your way to becoming more like Him may be as simple as this: be much with Him in loving communion, and be unconsciously changed into His likeness.

## **Finding Time**

No matter how busy our schedules, we find time for the things we really enjoy and the things we absolutely have

to do. For example, Hudson Taylor, the famed founder of what is now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, found himself sleeping night after night in a room crowded with Chinese coworkers. There he was observed late into the night seeking the Lord and reading the Scriptures by a feeble light.

Here are some hints among which you may find help for your particular circumstances.

Recognize the urgency of finding a time. Dedicate yourself to finding the answer.

If you're really looking for an excuse not to spend time with the Lord, acknowledge it. Ask the Lord for a desire to be with Him. Set aside an appropriate time, and begin.

Go to bed much earlier than you're used to so you can get up before others will be up to disturb you. Don't use your spouse as an excuse. Go ahead without him or her.

If young children demand nearly full-time attention, put them all down for a rest at the same time. Close the doors and let them cry if you must. Believe it or not, eventually they'll get used to rest time and even enjoy it. How do you think workers at day care centers survive?

First thing in the morning is generally recognized to be best, but be prepared to take advantage of other times as the need demands or opportunity provides. Be prepared even to break up your sleep if necessary to work in your time with the Lord.

## **Wasted Hours, Wasted Hearts!**

Instead of spending our time with the Lord, we too often waste our hours with TV, sports, the newspaper, unnecessary or even harmful books and magazines, and idle talk. We willingly forget that someday we'll answer to God for the gift of time as for all else He has given us that we so casually fritter away.