

Don't try to picture or envision the Lord much. God the Father and the Spirit are incorporeal, without bodies. He reveals His character to us in His Word. He is whatever we need. That must be sufficient.

To think of Jesus in the flesh is of limited help. Paul determined to know Him no longer after the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16). Nonetheless, meditating on His perfect life, sacrifice, and resurrection or to recall Him seated in His divine humanity at the right hand of God in power is not amiss, should you find it beneficial. Just so it doesn't hinder you in remembering that He is in you in power, and you are in Him resting content in His working. Let Him reveal Himself to you as He will.

If the effort to wait quietly before Him is at any time more a liability than an asset in your search for the Lord in love, talk to Him about Himself. Talk to Him about whom He is, and your relationship with Him, or about anything else, as He may lead.

Remember you are engaged in devotional prayer. Your attention is to be directed to Him and His things, not to you and yours. Anything that long robs you of His peace can't be of Him.

As you seek Him, the responsibilities of the day may interject themselves into your mind as distractions. To dispose of them, you may pause a moment to put them on a list of things to do. However, limit this practice so it doesn't usurp your time and interest. Rather than relieving you of the cares of this life, it can direct your attention from the Lord to them.

Returning to Rest

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him; Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret, it only causes harm. Those who wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."

Psalm 37:7-9, 11

We may find ourselves disappointed that returning to sweet fellowship with the Lord can be difficult. We may have been drawn away from the intimacy of our communion with Him since last we met alone. We may be beset with matters that are comparatively unimportant in the light of eternity. We could have become mentally and emotionally reengaged with the things of this life, things we'd left in God's able hands when last we met together. Our attitudes may even have reverted from rest to rush, from peace to push, from confidence in God to mistrust of Him, from harmony and unity with the Lord to rebellion, resistance, and resentment.

Alone with Him again, we start over to look to Him. We begin again to see Him in His infinite perfection, His entire trustworthiness, His love, compassion, mercy, and grace.

We may be surprised at how long it takes to find Him attractive once more. It may take quite a while for our attention to be drawn away from ourselves, our problems, needs, and wishes to Him in loving worship. This distraction from Him produces the need for us to spend so long alone with Him. Start stretching your time with Him from wherever it is now to something more adequate.

Hopefully, as the Lord continues to draw us and we keep responding, we will walk more closely with Him throughout the day. Then we will spend less devotional time relinquishing our resistance and returning to His arms.

More Practical Guidance

In your devotional prayer, fears should subside in trust in the trust-worthy God. All your concerns are to be rested quietly in His tender care. Fleshly rebellion, resentments, and resistance are to be replaced with loving surrender to your loving Lord. Sin of any kind ought to become distasteful, freely repented of, and gladly forsaken. Your heart should be prepared willingly to confess any sin to any person sinned against, as well as to the Lord.

Peace should replace anxiety. Gentleness, love, and sensitivity must displace anger, hatred, and bitterness. Meekness and humility must succeed pride and arrogance. Dependence on almighty God needs to supersede your spirit of independence. Quietness and rest of spirit should replace the constant pressure to do something. Praise and thanksgiving to the Lord must dissolve your complaining spirit. His life becomes the source of your life, replacing your independent self-life.

Now, achieving all of this may seem like a lot of hard work. I'm afraid that's what many of us make of it, without much success. An easier way is that of the meek and quiet spirit. At first it may not seem to be available to you, but as you continue to seek the Lord in prayer, He'll surely bring you to the place where He can give you at least something of that meek and quiet spirit. You will find Him silently replacing your selfish desires with His, your very self-centeredness with Himself.

In everything your purpose is to yield to the Lord your worshipful, trusting, and receptive attention in loving submission and quiet meekness of spirit. Out of this every good thing He has for you will ultimately come.

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By: Pastor Ron Marr

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" Psalm 42:1-2

First, let me urge you to remember that what is important is where your heart is not your mind or tongue as much as your heart for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).

The Word reminds us we need to guard our hearts with all diligence, "for out of it spring the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). In seeking the Lord in prayer, let our quest be from the heart and the spirit, not in empty superficialities.

First Prayer Concerns

We'll ultimately learn that what we say to the Lord is not nearly so important as what He says to us. We'll ultimately learn that what is on our lips is much less important than what is in our hearts. But most of us think the only way to communicate with God is with words.

As God works in our hearts a new desire to seek Him, we may find among our prayers: Lord, let me know my need of You Lord, give me a holy hunger for Yourself. Lord, teach me how to worship you in spirit and in truth. Lord, may Your name be praised.

Don't let it bother you if you haven't any feeling for such prayers at first. If you don't seem able to mean them, tell Him so. Ask Him to begin making it possible for you to mean them. If you feel hypocritical in praying what you don't feel, just pray what's really on your heart. Tell Him what you do think and feel. Just be honest with Him. He knows, cares, and understands. When you're honest with Him, He can begin the necessary work in your heart.

Now, there are some things you mustn't do. Don't be content with praying selfish, self-centered prayers. Don't ignore His call on your affections. Don't pretend you're responding when in your heart you aren't, you're just going through the motions. Be real with God, even if it's only to tell Him you can't do it. He'll have to do it, if it's to be done.

Prayer Journals

Try writing down your thoughts, prayers, concerns, and re-

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sponses to God in a prayer journal. Be absolutely honest with the Lord in everything you write. You may be amazed at how much it helps.

You may find keeping a prayer list to be a great help in intercessory prayer. However, when you can't pray for each person or situation as thoroughly as you would like, commit them all to the Lord to exercise His loving care over them. To focus your concern, lay your hand on the pages as you give them to God.

You may also find keeping a devotional diary to be of help and encouragement to yourself and perhaps even to others. Simply write down your prayer thoughts to God.

Another encouraging aid is to record answers to prayer, the loved ones who have met the Lord as you prayed for them, the financial blessings that arrived just as you needed them, the healings of body and spirit, and even when God denied your requests to bring about His better plans. Consulting this section when you seem to be in a dry season will remind you that God is lovingly in control.

Ways of Communing with Him

I don't want to tell you how to approach the Lord. Yet I don't want, either, to fail to give you what help I can. So let me merely make this broad range of suggestions and trust His Spirit to be your personal tutor. In seeking to give Him your loving attention in devotional prayer, you may do any or all of the following as He may lead.

Converse with Him as friend with a friend. Share your most private concerns, your failures and frustrations, your sense of guilt and need.

Listen. Just give Him an attentive ear, and let Him do with it as He will. Recognize your utter dependence on Him, His mercy and grace.

Tell Him you want and need Him. Seek after Him. Give expression to the longing for Him placed within by the Holy Spirit. Long for Him regardless of the results. Desire Him in all the ways your seeking heart will devise.

Seek to agree with Him in everything. Seek not to fear His plans and purposes for you, but to let Him teach you to trust Him.

Joy and rejoice in Him and His love. Sing hymns of worship, praise, or thanksgiving.

Ways of Seeking Him

Think on Him. Meditate on Him, His person, His character,

and His work as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Eternal King. Contemplate His infinite perfection.

Thank Him that He is all-powerful, all-knowing, always present, infinite and eternal, unchanging, surpassing finite comprehension. Thank Him that He is love, that He is faithful and kind, gracious and merciful, true and pure, righteous and holy, just and good.

Rejoice that He is worthy of love, worship, adoration, and praise. Praise Him that He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Praise Him that He is the way, the truth, and the life. Give Him glory that He is the bread, water, and word of life, and that He has become our salvation, light, shepherd, resurrection, strength, and shield. Give Him honor that He is the God of peace and hope. Praise Him that He is the ultimate satisfaction for all we ever long for or need.

Worship and adore Him. Offer Him back the love He first gives you. Thank and praise Him for all His goodness, yes, but much more for Himself. Joy and rejoice in Him. See Him in His love, compassion, mercy, and grace to us. Rejoice in His entire trustworthiness.

Ways to Long for Him

Long to be filled with Him and His Spirit for no selfish purpose, only for His own pleasure and glory. Long that He might be praised and honored, glorified and magnified, worshiped and adored. Yearn to please Him and give Him pleasure.

Long that you may be purified from everything that does not magnify Him and bring praise, glory, and honor to Him. Long that He show you your loathsome sin sickness, your depravity and degradation. Long that He show you your need of Him with His love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, cleansing, and peace.

Praying in a Meek and Quiet Spirit

You may find yourself moving slowly from a lot of activity to more quietness and receptivity of spirit before Him. (See Psalm 62:5, 130:5, and 131:2.) You may learn to come nearer the end of your independent activity to rest quietly and trustfully in Him. Have no other purpose than to be with Him, assured that He will do whatever pleases Him in and for you.

Let Him bring all resistance to an end. He doesn't have to prove Himself to you, speak to you, or instruct you. Rest in quietness before Him, knowing that He is doing His will in you and on your behalf, whether you feel it or not.

Thoughts come and go without greatly impinging on the meek and quiet spirit that may return as readily to its rest in the Lord as a bird to its accustomed perch. Each thought that is of any consequence may be committed unobtrusively to the Lord in passing, as the meek and quiet spirit continues its rest in Him.

When that meek and quiet spirit is moved to express its love of the Lord or to worship, thank, or praise Him, it may do so without

strain, urgency, or disturbance of your peace and rest in Him. What a joy and delight. But be careful not to make much of the joy, or even of this time of special quietness with Him. Magnify the Lord only for Himself!

An Example

Let me outline for you one way the time of devotional prayer may be profitably spent. The following suggestions are offered as guidelines for those who need a model, not as a rigid structure to be strictly adhered to. Prayer times vary as the Lord gives fresh direction.

Read a portion of Scripture, good daily devotional, or part of a helpful book.

If there's anything on your heart to talk to the Lord about, share it with Him, especially anything that has put a barrier between you and Him. Write it all down if possible. Be as absolutely open and honest as you can. Don't go looking for anything. Just share with the Lord whatever is on your heart. Confess any known sin to the Lord. If any dispute exists between you and another person, commit yourself unhesitatingly to make it right.

Commit all of it into the Lord's keeping, trusting Him to do all that needs to be done about each facet. Don't make more of any of it than God makes, but respond fully to His speaking.

When you're done, or if there is nothing you want to share with the Lord, open a good topical Bible. Select a subject heading such as God, Jesus Christ, one of His attributes or names, prayer, praise, worship, love, or trust. Or, choose a passage of Scripture such as Isaiah 6, Revelation 4 and 5, Ezekiel 1, Job 40-42, or a worship Psalm.

Read for a few moments, soaking in the Scriptures. Let the Lord draw you to Himself. Seek as much as possible to be occupied with Him alone. Remain for a time in loving, submissive prayer communion with Him.

When your mind wanders and you sense the need of further assistance for your prayer communion, let your eyes fall again to the open page before you. Let them fall there, not so much to learn anything in particular as to allow the Spirit to warm your heart again to the Lord Himself. When He has, return to quiet prayer communion with Him.

Whether He moves you to energetically seek Him, adoringly worship Him, or quietly wait on Him, do it. Repeat this as often as you find it helpful.

As you rest contentedly before Him in a meek and quiet spirit, you will find yourself relinquishing all to Him without exerting effort. Sometimes He will just relieve you of the "no longer wanted" burden of your selfish desires.

Practical Guidance