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## BIBLE READING JOURNAL

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*and on His law he meditates day and night.  
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.  
Whatever he does prospers.”  
– Psalm 1:1-3*

### How to Have a Quiet Time

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The following is a suggested sequence for a practical Quiet Time. This is not the only way, by any means, of spending time in God's Word and prayer. There are many different approaches that one could take. However, if you are just starting to develop a new habit, this model will help you incorporate some important principles.

As when learning any new skill, learning to use the Bible Reading Journal will seem somewhat mechanical and artificial at first. That's okay. You'll find these guidelines helpful for developing your personal walk with God. With more experience you will see other ways to enhance your daily Quiet Time – you will want to “colour outside the lines” so to speak.

Try to keep the balance between discipline and legalism. Having seven Quiet Times a week will not make you more loved or accepted by God. Remember that filling out the Journal pages is not an end in itself. Your goal is to get to know and love the Word of God and the God of the Word.

Your desire should be that of the Psalmist: “*Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul... Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.*” (Psalm 143:8,10)

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## An 8-Step Model

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### **STEP ONE: Prepare your heart and mind.**

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Before you read God's Word you need:

a) a cleansed life

Confess your sin. *1 John 1:9, Proverbs 28:13*

b) an understanding mind

Pray for Illumination. *Psalm 119:12, 18, 27, 35*

c) a humble spirit

Depend on the Holy Spirit. *John 14:26, 1 Corinthians 2:12*

d) a submitted will

Be willing to obey. *John 7:17, Psalm 119:33-34*

### **STEP TWO: Read the passage for the day.**

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Choose either the Chapter-a-Day Plan, or the One Year Plan, or Design Your Own Plan (p. 18). Then follow the Bible reading plan you have chosen and read the passage marked out for the day. Read it several times if you can.

### **STEP THREE: Mark anything that stands out.**

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After you have read the passage at least once, go back over it and mark those things that stand out to you. Look for recurring words or concepts; key ideas; promises; commands; opposites; anything that seems to contribute significantly to the meaning of the text, or that simply impresses you. Feel free to experiment with and compare ideas with others. Over time you will develop a system that is meaningful to you.

Some find a series of symbols useful for this purpose. Others like to use coloured highlighters. Both pens and highlighters which use pigment instead of ink (which will bleed through the page) can be purchased inexpensively from Bible book stores or stationery stores.

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### **STEP FOUR: Meditate on the passage.**

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Meditation is to the soul what digestion is to the body. Feasting on the best of food without digesting it will lead to illness and starvation. In the same way, meditating on what God says is essential for spiritual health. Meditation involves pondering God's Word, considering its implications for life. Use the PRECEPTS acronym to ask questions of the passage.

Is there a...

**P**ayer to pray  
**R**eason to praise  
**E**rror to avoid  
**C**ommand to obey  
**E**xample to follow  
**P**romise to claim  
**T**ruth to believe  
**S**in to confess

### **STEP FIVE: Record your insights.**

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You will probably not be able to record all your insights for the day, especially if you read more than one chapter. You should however, choose one insight (most likely centering around something you marked in your Bible) to record on your Journal page. Recording your thoughts helps you clarify them and preserve them for further meditation. It helps you to share them more effectively with others. Looking back over your Journal entries will also enable you to see patterns and trends in your life; both good and bad.

To use the Journal page (see example following) simply record the date and indicate all you read that day. Then give the specific reference for that part of your reading which you'll comment on. Give your insight a short descriptive title in the space provided (this helps you remember your insight later when looking back over your entries). Then, simply quote the verse or give a summary of the insight. The "Insight Gained" section is for you to explain your insight or why it is

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that this particular passage stood out in your mind. It is usually a good practice to limit your comments to the space provided as this will encourage you to be clear and concise.

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### **STEP SIX: Write out a prayer of application.**

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In many ways this is the most important aspect of your Bible reading time. The temptation is to think that once you have read God's Word, and have gained some good insights, the goal is accomplished. Not so! God has been speaking to you from His Word. It is now critical that you respond back to God regarding what He has been saying to you.

It is important to actually write out your prayer as this will help save you from a vague, foggy response. It will also be helpful to be able to look back on these prayers over the months and years to see God's dealings with you, and how you have grown. Use the section marked "My Prayer to God" to record a brief prayer of application. Make sure to keep it personal (i.e. using "I", "me", "my", etc.), focusing on what you should be doing, rather than on what others should do, learn, etc.

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### **STEP SEVEN: Pray the passage back to God.**

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Take some time to pray your written prayer to God. Remember to thank Him for the grace He will give you to live out what He has prompted you to pray about.

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### **STEP EIGHT: Pray about other things.**

Now that you have responded back to God regarding what you have read it is time to pray about other things. It is helpful to follow the pattern given in The Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6:9-13), or to use the ACTS acronym to give balance to your prayer life.

#### **A**doration

- Worship God for who He is.

#### **C**onfession

- Confess your sins in the light of His holiness.

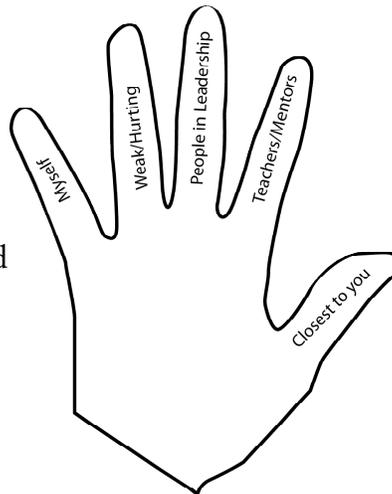
#### **T**hanksgiving

- Thank Him for His provisions and promises.

#### **S**upplication

• Pray for His supply of grace to meet your needs and the needs of others. Here are some suggestions:

- pray for those you love
- pray for your Bible leaders, teachers and pastors
- pray for those in authority, leadership and government
- pray for those who are hurting, weak, ill or imprisoned
- pray for yourself



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*“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.” – 1 Peter 2:2*

### **15 Minutes With God**

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Right about now you are thinking, “Wow! It would take me about three hours to do all that stuff!!” Well you could certainly invest three hours profitably in a Quiet Time (What a great idea! Why not try it some time!) But if you are just starting to develop this spiritual growth habit you would do well to begin with fifteen minutes a day.

The key to success is to carve out some time each day and to maintain it consistently. It is much better to spend fifteen minutes a day, consistently, than to have a one-hour “guilt trip” sporadically. Over time you will want to expand those minutes as God enables.

Here is a sample outline just to give some idea of how the time could be used.

### **A Sample Quiet Time Outline**

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Step One	Heart & Mind Preparation	30 seconds
Step Two	Read Your Bible	4 Minutes
Step Three	Mark Your Bible	1 Minute
Step Four	Meditate on the Passage	3 Minutes
Step Five	Record Your Insights	3 Minutes
Step Six	Write out Prayer of Application	30 seconds
Step Seven	Pray Passage Back to God	30 seconds
Step Eight	Pray About Other Things	2 1/2 Minutes

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**A Sample Journal Page**

Memory Work:  1  2  3  4  5  6  New

Date: May 1, 2008

Scripture Read: Luke chapters 4 & 5 Insight Reference: Luke 4:42

Insight Title: "The Solitary Place"

Insight Verse or Summary: "At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place."

**Insight Gained:** Jesus was clear on his mission; He was intimately acquainted with His Father's will. He often withdrew to lonely places and prayed in those places where He received His marching orders. I am keen to know and do the work God has for me. But, am I willing to spend much time in the solitary place? If I don't, I will not be clear on God's will and will not have God's power and blessing to carry it out.

**My Prayer to God:** Father, please lead me to the solitary place and help me to spend much time there with You. I want to know Your agenda; your purposes; Your priorities and values; and I want to operate in the power of Your Spirit, accomplishing the purposes for which You have called me.

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*“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth;  
meditate on it day and night,  
so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.  
Then you will be prosperous and successful.”  
– Joshua 1:8*

### **The Key to Success**

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Now that you know how to use the Bible Reading Journal there is one more vital ingredient you need in order to succeed in developing and maintaining your daily Quiet Time with God: Make a Commitment! There are seven important steps to an effective commitment:

#### **1. Tag the Time.**

The ideal is to meet with God at the same time in the same place every day. Choose a time when you will be alert and able to give your full attention. For many people this is usually early in the morning. For others late at night works best. There is no time more spiritual than another. Choose the time that works best for you. Make sure to give at least 15 minutes.

#### **2. Prepare the Place.**

Decide ahead of time where you will have your Quiet Time. Try to choose a place where you will be comfortable (not too comfortable!) and have a minimum of distractions.

#### **3. Determine the Date.**

Decide when you are going to start your new spiritual growth habit and commit to doing it daily for at least six weeks (it takes at least that long to begin to establish a habit), preferably one year.

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### **4. Pick the Plan.**

Don't wait until you sit down to have your quiet time before you start to think about where you will read in the Bible. Determine ahead of time whether you will follow the Chapter-a-Day or One Year Reading Plans or whether you will Design Your Own Plan. Then stick with the plan!

### **5. Provide the Partner.**

Accountability is one of the most critical steps in developing your Quiet Time! Share your commitment to God with someone (preferably not a spouse) who will agree to look at your Bible Reading Journal on at least a weekly basis. The purpose of this vital step is not to load you down with someone else's desires, but rather, to help you succeed in following through on the goals and action plans you have set for yourself before God. It is not necessary for this person to read all your most intimate thoughts-it is enough that they see that you are consistently using the Journal pages.

### **6. Fill-out the Form.**

It is important to write down the action plan that you develop. This will serve as a reminder of the specific commitments you want to make, and it will facilitate sharing your commitment with an accountability partner. The Quiet Time Commitment Form (next page) has been provided for this purpose.

### **7. Keep the Commitment!**

The steps outlined above will be of no use to you unless you are convinced of the importance of having a Daily Quiet Time, and are determined to develop this spiritual growth habit. The enemy of your soul knows the immense significance of your consistent Quiet Time and he will do everything in his considerable power to thwart your attempts at developing this discipline. But, remember that The Holy Spirit is far greater than the devil and He will give you the desires of your heart. "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13)