

Drawing Near to God



By
Chris Losey

Thanks for your interest in

Drawing Near to God.

It is my hope that the
information in this booklet
will encourage and help you
draw close to Him.

Dedicated to my beautiful wife, Sharon,
who has been a great example to me
of someone who draws close to God
and encourages me to do the same.

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IDM - Institute of Disciple Making



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James 4:8-10

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts,
you double-minded. ⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep;
let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.
¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord,
and He will exalt you.

DRAWING NEAR TO GOD

What it means

Let's begin with a question. What does it mean to draw near to God?

In Moses' day

Perhaps drawing near to God is doing something similar to what Moses did in the Old Testament. You may remember Moses as God's chosen deliverer who took the Jews out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and to the Promised Land. While the Jews were on the journey they camped near Mt. Sinai. During that time Moses drew near to God. On one occasion, he went up on the mountain and spent forty days and forty nights communing with and listening to God renew His covenant (Exodus 34:1-35).

When Moses returned to the camp, the people saw that his face shone. This made them afraid. When Moses realized what was happening, he used it to his advantage. He used the people's "fear of him" to motivate them to do what God had commanded him to tell them. They were a very obstinate people! After Moses told them what to do, he put on a veil. Why? 2 Corinthians 3:13 reveals that Moses noticed after he was out of God's presence for a time, the shine on his face began to fade away, and he didn't want the people to see it. Moses left the veil on until the next time he drew near to God and his face began to shine again. He realized "no shiny face – no fearful people – no fearful people, no obedience." On the other hand, "Shiny face – fearful people – fearful people – obedient people." He put on the veil to deceive the people into thinking that the shine on his face was still there.

Wouldn't that be great today if after we drew near to God, our faces would shine, and if we didn't spend time on a regular basis, the shine would fade away? We could then look at each other and say, "Wow,

brother, nice shine!” or “It sure looks to me like you haven’t been spending much time with God recently. How come you got that veil on?”

In today’s world

Today, there is not a place where God’s physical presence comes down like it did on Mt. Sinai in order for us to get physically closer to Him.

Psalm 139:7-10 states that God’s Spirit is everywhere. The verses say,

⁷ Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. ⁹ If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, ¹⁰ Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

Because God is everywhere, physically speaking, we can’t get any closer to Him than we already are. Also, since the Holy Spirit indwells (**Jn 14:16-17**), baptizes (**1 Cor 12:12,13**) and seals (**Eph 1:14**) every person when they come to Christ, it means that God is not only around us, He is in us. **Romans 8:9** states, “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” If a person has the Holy Spirit, he is a Christian and belongs to God. If not, he is not a Christian, and does not belong to God.

So again, I ask you, “What does it mean to draw near to God?” It means drawing nearer to Him spiritually. Before we investigate how to do this, let’s first look at some important truth about drawing near.

Important truth about drawing near

James 4:8a says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”

The Bible invites us to draw near to God

Notice that the first part of James 4:8a invites us to draw near to God. Drawing near is not something we naturally do because we all have a sin nature. Our natural tendency is to draw near to the things that feed our sinful desires.

As we draw near to God, He draws near to us

Notice the second half of **James 4:8a** states, "...and He will draw near to you." God does not force His way into our lives. He wants us to choose to draw near to Him. When we make that choice, He draws near to us and begins to pour out amazing blessings, which we will look at shortly.

Why can sinful people draw near to a holy God? They can do it because God first drew near to them by sending Christ to die for their sin. Drawing near to God and Him drawing near to us is thus a bit of a mystery. On the one hand as Christians, we are invited to draw near to God. When we do, He will draw near to us. On the other hand, when we were non-believers, God drew near to us through Christ, so that we could come to Him by faith. **1 John 4:10** states, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." It is not that we reached out to God, but that He first reached out to us, by having Jesus be our propitiation. A propitiation is a thing used to propitiate. To propitiate means to appease and to make favorable. In other words, Jesus appeased God's wrath toward us so that God would look upon us favorably. How did Jesus do it? He took our sin upon Himself and died for us on the cross, enduring God's wrath so that we wouldn't have to. Without Christ's willing sacrifice, Hell would have been our final destination.

We draw near in humility and God cleanses and exalts us

Listen now to all of James 4:8-10,

⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

⁹ Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

As we draw near, we must do it in humility, seeing ourselves for who we were without God; pride-filled, double-minded, miserable sinners in need of God's cleansing and purifying touch. We may flippantly think that we are doing God a favor by drawing near to Him. Quite the opposite is true. God is doing us a great favor because it is only by drawing close to Him that we can keep from sliding back into our miserable, wretched state as sinners. Praise God, that He saved us and made us His children! It really is quite a miracle that God calls us to draw near. The great news is that as we humble ourselves in God's presence, He will exalt us.

Listen now to **Hebrews 10:22-23**,

²² let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled *clean* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

Because of what God did for us through Christ, we can also come near to God with sincere hearts in full assurance of faith. In other words, we can come humbly, sincerely, and confidently. Awesome!

How a person draws near to God

How does a person draw near to God, spiritually? The two primary ways are through prayer and through God's Word, the Bible. Let's now take a closer look in order to understand how this takes place. We'll begin by exploring how to draw close to God through prayer.

Drawing close to God through prayer

Prayer may be defined as communicating with God. A person can pray to God silently or using spoken words. It can also be done privately or publicly. In addition, a person can pray by himself or with others.

Although Christians can pray anytime, anywhere, sometimes God doesn't hear from us until we want or need something. Maybe we are sick and need healing. Maybe we need a new job. In such cases, our prayers are often all about us. Although God desires to help meet our needs, if those are the only prayers we pray, **James 4:3** may apply, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures."

What if there was a way to pray that wasn't just about us, but instead centered on God and His kingdom as well as addressed our own needs? There is! It is found both in Luke 11:1-4 and Matthew 6:5-13. In **Luke 11:1-4**, Jesus disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, so He taught them what we commonly refer to as "The Lord's of Disciples' Prayer."

Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins. For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.

This abbreviated prayer is essentially the same one Jesus taught His disciples in **Matthew 6:5-13**. Let's take a closer look at the Matthew 6:5-13 passage in order to understand what Jesus was teaching His disciples regarding prayer. Verses 5-8 state,

⁵ "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶ "But you, when you pray, go into your

inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you. ⁷ "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸ "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

Notice that Jesus gives these don'ts and do's regarding prayer:

- Don't pray to be seen by men – v5
- Do go into your inner room and pray to the Lord in private – v6
- Don't use meaningless repetition – v7
- Do know, that the Lord knows your needs before you ask – v8

Then in **Matthew 6:9-13** Jesus once again teaches His disciples what we commonly call the Lord's or Disciples' prayer:

⁹ "Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ 'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ 'Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² 'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.']

Did you catch the first part of verse nine where Jesus said, "pray in this way," not necessarily "with these words"? When the words of the prayer are looked at in depth, it is clear they represent five categories that Jesus wants His disciples to remember when they pray. Let's now look closely at each one. The first is PRAISE.

PRAISE – *Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name* – v9.

The word hallowed means holy. It seems that Jesus is telling His disciples to start their prayers with praising God for His holiness.

Holiness is the attribute most associated with God in heaven. The angels around His throne call out to each other as they fly, “Holy, holy, holy,” (Isaiah 6:1-3).

When Jesus said, “Pray in this way,” He was telling us to praise God for who He is. Who is He? He is not only holy, but He is also all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere present, merciful, gracious, unchanging, good, faithful, truthful, wise, kind, just and loving.

We not only can praise God for who He is, which focuses on His attributes, we can also praise Him for what He has done. With His great power and wisdom, He created and sustains everything! He has also given us incredible blessings. He saved us, gave us spiritual gifts, family and friends, a measure of good health, and the privilege to know and serve him... He has given us eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to think, language to communicate, and legs to walk. The things God has done for us are beyond number and measure. We could never exhaust all He has done for us, and for which He deserves our eternal thanks!

Starting our prayers with praise and thanks, keeps us from being ME-Centered.

The second category of prayer Jesus taught His disciples can be summarized by the word PROGRESS.

PROGRESS – *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven – v10.* Here Jesus teaches His disciples to pray for the PROGRESS of God’s kingdom; that it would advance and move forward until His will is done on earth as it is done in heaven. Although this will not fully happen until Christ returns, we need to pray for it because that is what Jesus taught His disciples to do.

What are the things that move God's kingdom forward on this earth? His kingdom moves forward through evangelism, children's ministries, women's ministries, youth ministry, men's ministry, missions, music ministry, radio ministry, Christian movies, Sunday school, AWANA, retreats, conferences, books, bible study, and prayer. The types of ministries that cause God's kingdom to advance are endless. Notice again, that praying for the PROGRESS of God's kingdom keeps the focus on God and His kingdom rather than jumping immediately to our own needs.

The third category of prayer that Jesus taught His disciples is PROVISION.

PROVISION – *Give us this day our daily bread – v11.* Provision speaks of asking God to meet people's needs. Asking God to "give us this day our daily bread," helps meet our need for food. But since Jesus said we are to "pray in this way," He likely wants us to pray for His provision in every area of need: Physical, emotional, mental, financial, and social. Notice that this is not only praying for our own needs but also the needs of others.

Again, praying Jesus' way keeps everything in the proper perspective. A provision prayer would be, "Lord, I ask you to be with my friend as he has surgery today. Give him strength and give doctors great wisdom. Lord, bless another friend who recently lost his job and needs a new one. Guide him to the right employer..."

The fourth category that Jesus taught His disciples to pray is PURITY.

PURITY – *Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors – v12.* If we hope to have our own sins forgiven, we need to forgive those who have sinned against us. We not only can pray for our own purity, but purity in the church. We can pray that God would keep the

church staff pure, the youth pure, and men's and women's ministries pure. We can also pray for the church around the world that it would remain pure, and that Christians everywhere would have pure motives and pure dealings. Purity is so important in the Christian life.

The fifth and final category Jesus encouraged His disciples to pray about is PROTECTION.

PROTECTION – *And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil – v13.* Here Jesus teaches His disciples the importance of praying for God's divine protection against the devil and the powers of darkness. Here we can pray things like; help us Lord not give in to temptation; protect us from Satan and any demonic influences; help us turn away from sin and turn toward You; when we sin against You, Lord, put deep conviction in our hearts to return to You; and also, put a hedge of protection around families in our church and especially around our youth so they will learn to trust You completely.

What did Jesus teach His disciples to pray? He taught them to start by PRAISING GOD for who He is and thanking Him for what He has done. Next Jesus taught them to pray for the PROGRESS of God's kingdom, that it would move forward until it becomes on earth what it is in heaven. Jesus then encouraged His disciples to pray for the PROVISION of needs; their own needs and the needs of others. Next, He instructed them to pray for their own PURITY and that of others. Finally, Jesus taught His disciples to pray for God's divine PROTECTION. What a great way to pray: PRAISE, PROGRESS, PROVISION, PURITY, PROTECTION. Also, notice that the last sentence brings everything full circle back to PRAISE, "For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, AMEN."

As you pray, don't rush. Take time to listen for God's promptings. If He prompts you do something, write it down so you don't forget. Be aware, God will not prompt you to do anything contrary to His Word.

Does Jesus say that using the PRAISE, PROGRESS, PROVISION, PURITY, PROTECTION format, is the only way to pray? NO! But it certainly is a great way since it was what He instructed His disciples to do. It also covers a lot of ground rather than simply focusing on our own needs.

So, when a person is seeking to draw near to God in prayer, praying the way Jesus taught His disciples is quite appropriate and can bring the person to the throne of grace in a beautiful way.

The second primary way we draw near to God is through His Word, the Bible.

Drawing near to God through His Word, the Bible

How does a person use God's Word to draw close to God? He does it in a variety of ways. He can **HEAR** the Word that someone else shares with him, like when he hears a sermon. He can also **READ** God's Word for himself. Some people have Bible reading programs where they read through the Bible in a year. A third and even better way is to **STUDY** the Word. This can happen as people study in preparation for a Bible study or small group they attend. A fourth way is to **MEMORIZE** key verses from their study. When a person memorizes a verse or passage of Scripture, he can recall it and think his way through it. A fifth way to get into God's Word is to **MEDITATE** on it, which means to think on it deeply and apply it to life. Christian meditation has nothing to do with repeating mantras or contemplating one's navel. It has everything to do with thinking deeply about what a verse or passage means and then applying it to life.

HEARING the Word is good but it is not enough.
READING the Word is good but it is not enough.
STUDYING the Word is very good but still is not enough.
MEMORIZING the Word is great but still is not enough.
MEDITATING on the Word is what each person must strive for.

So how does this work? The Navigator Ministry has what is called the hand diagram where the little finger represents HEARING the Word. The ring finger represents READING the Word. The middle finger represents STUDYING the Word. The pointer finger represents MEMORIZING the word. And finally, the thumb represents MEDITATING on the Word.



Trying to grasp objects without including the thumb doesn't work very well, but get the thumb involved and a person's grip on an object is greatly strengthened, especially when the various fingers are also involved. For example, a person can HEAR a great sermon, then go home and MEDITATE on what he HEARD and have it affect him deeply. In the same way a person can READ the Bible and then take time to MEDITATE on what he has READ and get great benefit from it. A person can STUDY a passage of Scripture and MEDITATE on it and the benefits will be great. Finally, a person can MEMORIZE a verse or passage from Scripture and MEDITATE on it, and there will be great benefits as well.

The point is, MEDITATION can and needs to happen with HEARING, READING, STUDYING, or MEMORIZING the Word. If meditation happens, the person will be greatly blessed because it is MEDITATING on God's Word that plants it deep within a person's soul and helps bring his life into conformity with God's values. Whether we HEAR, READ, STUDY, or MEMORIZE God's Word, we also need to MEDITATE, so that God's truth becomes part of our value system and affects our

lives for good. As this happens, the Holy Spirit can bring the truth to mind when needed to keep us on the right path. One Christian speaker said, "I can't even get into a sin without the Holy Spirit bringing ten Bible verses to mind." That is exactly the way it should be!

Unfortunately, some believers equate getting into the Bible with simply reading it. If all a person does is read, he may be disappointed with the minimal transformation that takes place in his life. Although reading is good, it needs to be linked with meditation, so the person thinks carefully about what he has read and applies it to his life.

Psalm 1:1-3 is a perfect example of the importance of MEDITATING on God's Word.

¹ How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he **meditates** day and night. ³ And he will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.

The Palmist had his life changed by meditating on the Word of God day and night.

This brings up other questions like, where in the Bible, should a person go to draw near to God? Should he start with the Old or New Testament? Should he spend a certain amount of time in prayer and study? Is it best to draw near in the morning or the evening? Is there a particular book of the Bible that he should study?

Simply put, every person's time with God in prayer and study will likely be somewhat different. It all depends on a person's schedule, needs,

and goals. Here are some ways that many people have used in their quest to draw near to God in their study time:

- **Go through the Bible in a year** – to do so it will mean reading essentially four chapters a day. There are Bibles set up to read through the Bible in a year that have a section in the Old and New Testaments each day. They are called “One Year Bibles,” and can be purchased at www.cbd.com (Christian Book Distributors). Although this is a great way to go through God’s Word, it is a lot to absorb when you are trying to apply what you have read each day.
- **Go through the New Testament a chapter a day** and think deeply on what you have read. This will take approximately nine months to go through the entire New Testament. Most people can handle a chapter a day.
- **Go through the Bible in four years** by reading a chapter a day and thinking about it deeply. Again, most folks can handle a chapter a day, but it may be tough wading through the Old Testament Prophets.
- **Seek to Master a particular book of the Bible** by reading a chapter of it a day. If it is a short book, like Ephesians, you can read it through several times during a month. After that, you can move on to another book to master it or try another kind of study. You will be amazed how great it is to become very familiar with various books in the Bible.
- **Do a topical study in the Bible** for your own benefit or to teach your family. This may lead you to overcome a particular sin in your life or in the life of a family member. Memorize key verses

and or passages. You may need to purchase a topical Bible, concordance and a commentary set to help you.

- **Do the “Proverbial Habit”** by reading the chapter in the book of Proverbs that corresponds to the date of the month and then meditating on it. For example, on the first of the month read Proverbs chapter 1. On the tenth of the month read Proverbs chapter ten. Since many months have thirty-one days and the book of Proverbs has 31 chapters, you will read through the entire book of Proverbs each month. You will gain great wisdom because Proverbs is all about wisdom.

Whatever study you choose or design for yourself, I highly recommend marking (highlighting/staring/underlining) verses that greatly touch your heart. It is even good to work at memorizing them. This will help you as you meditate. It is also helpful to ask yourself the following questions: Does the passage show me any sins to avoid? Are there any promises I can claim? Is there anything I need to do to change my life for the better? Is there one specific thing that God is trying to teach me through the passage?

There are many ways to study the Bible. Before you pick one, perhaps ask God what He wants you to do and then do your best to listen and do what He says. This month you may feel led to study one way, and next month another. The real issue is, “Are you getting into the Bible in a way that draws you nearer to God?”

Why many people don’t draw near to God

Even though most Christians know they need to be in prayer and in God’s Word, many struggle with it. There are numerous reasons for this. One is the “Tyranny of the Urgent.”

The “Tyranny of the Urgent”

The “Tyranny of the Urgent” is simply the busyness of life. Demands at work and home often crowd out quality time with God. About the time a person sits down to pray and study, the phone or doorbell rings, the dog needs to go outside, dishes need washing, something needs fixing, a child says, “Can you play with me?” or any of a thousand other things which get in the way of drawing near to God. That’s one reason to schedule time with the Lord when distractions are minimal, like in the early morning or in the later evening.

Here’s a great idea! Make time with God an even higher priority than a doctor’s appointment. When a person has a doctor’s appointment, everything else gets put on the back burner, because not showing up at a doctor’s appointment can cost money and be detrimental to one’s physical or emotional health. Missing time with God on a regular basis can be a detriment too, to one’s spiritual health.

If people decide to get serious about their relationship with God, they can bet that the forces of darkness will try to throw a wrench in the works. That’s why Christians need to be committed to make their time with God a top priority no matter what!

They fail to plan and thus plan to fail

Another reason why many people don’t spend consistent time drawing close to God in His Word is because they fail to plan for it. They think it will simply happen. No doubt, life is super busy. Unless a person has a plan “to draw near,” it likely will not happen. Failing to plan is equivalent to planning to fail.

They don’t think they need to

Another reason why some people don’t spend consistent time drawing near to God is because they don’t think they need to. They may think to themselves, I’m in better spiritual condition than some Christians, or I

went to a seminar a year ago and I already know enough of the Bible to apply to my life, or I'm a deacon so I'm close enough, right? Wrong! Even if you are a pastor you need to get into God's Word and prayer on a regular basis.

Think about getting physically clean. Most folks take a shower every day, or maybe not! Someone put it this way, "One day without a shower and you begin to feel like a slob. Two days without a shower and you begin to look like a slob. Three days without a shower you begin to smell like a slob. Four days without a shower, you are a slob." Why is this so? It is so because our bodies need daily physical cleaning from the sweat and grime of life.

In the same way we need to renew our minds daily with God's Word and prayer because we live in a spiritually fallen world full of spiritual grime and temptations. Your study from a week ago is not going to keep you spiritually strong today.

Roman's 12:2 states, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." To be conformed means to be pressed into a mold or to play a role. The world is trying to press us into its mold. It wants us to play a role of something we are not. Instead, God wants us to be transformed. Transformed means to become something completely new. Transformed is the Greek word *metamorphow* from which we get our English word metamorphosis. Metamorphosis is what takes place when a caterpillar goes into a cocoon and comes out something completely new, a butterfly. Butterflies can fly and eat flower nectar while Caterpillars are confined to walking short distances and eating various kinds of vegetation. God wants to transform us from being sinful humans to being spirit-filled humans who soar high for him. How does this happen? It happens through the renewing of our minds. Our minds get soiled by the sin of

the world and God wants us to renew them through prayer and meditating on His Word.

Drawing near to God can also be likened to eating. Our meal from yesterday will not sustain us today. Today we need to eat to renew our energy. Drawing near is also like riding a bike. If while riding a person stops pedaling, it won't before the bike slows down and stops. In order to keep riding, he needs to keep pedaling.

They have the wrong motivations

A fourth reason why people don't draw closer to God is because they have the wrong motivations for doing so. May I ask, what is your primary motivation for spending time with the Lord? Is it what you think your pastor expects you to do? Is it something your wife has pressured you to do? Do you do it out of guilt because you told someone that you would? Although all the above can be motivators to a lesser or greater degree, they are not the right, primary motivations.

With that said, let's now look at what I believe are the right motivations for drawing near to God. After all, if we are not motivated to spend time, we likely won't do it.

The right motivations for drawing near

In my view, there are two primary motivations for drawing near to God. The first is:

The love of God - God's love for us and our love for Him

The main motivation that all of us Christians need to have for drawing near to God is His love for us and our love for Him. **2 Corinthians 5:14,15** states, "¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; ¹⁵ and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." Simply stated, this verse says it is

the love of Christ (His love for us, and our love for Him, based on all He has done for us) that needs to control and motivate us, so that we no longer live for ourselves, but for Him. When two people deeply love each other, they want to spend time building their relationship. So it is with us and God.

What are some of the things God has done for us?

- He saved us from sin and put us on a path to heaven
- He gave us the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us
- He gave us the Bible to study in order to know how to live
- He gave us the avenue of prayer to talk with Him
- He gave us amazing physical bodies; eyes, ears, hands...
- He gave us spiritual gifts so we could serve him
- He gives us peace and joy
- He blessed us with various relationships
- He placed us in a beautiful world...

If we stopped to count our blessings, we would realize just how much God has done for us and our motivation for drawing close would go off the charts!

The amazing benefits of being in God's Word

The second primary motivation for drawing close to God is the amazing benefits we receive. Let's begin by looking at some of the amazing benefits of being in God's Word.

It keeps us from sin

Psalm 119:9-11 states,

⁹ How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping *it* according to Your word. ¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

¹¹ Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

Learning from God's Word and applying it, is the only way to keep a person's life pure. It helps keep a person from sinning against God. How does this work? It happens when a person learns from God's Word what God wants and then integrates it into actions. For example, if a person sees that the Bible teaches the dangers of getting drunk, and then integrates that truth into his life so he avoids drunkenness, it will keep him from sinning against God. If a person learns that God wants him to love his wife sacrificially as Christ loved the church and begins to put her needs above his own, he will be blessed.

It helps us become approved workman

2 Timothy 2:15 states, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." This verse basically states that when we become very familiar with God's Word and can handle it accurately, that we gain God's approval. Why? Because He can work through us effectively to help others. For example, if a husband and wife are struggling in their marriage and a friend can show them what the Bible teaches about marriage, it may save their marriage.

It teaches, reproves, corrects and trains us

2 Timothy 3:16 states, "¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for **teaching**, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **training** in righteousness." We hopefully want to point our lives toward God and get on the path of righteousness. When we draw near to God through His Word, His Word **teaches** us how to live. We soon learn how to get on the right path, but sometimes we step off the

path. If we do, God's Word **reproves** (rebukes) us and says, "Hey, you are going in the wrong direction." His Word can then **correct** us and show us the way back on the right path. It can then **train** us in righteousness and help us stay on that path. Our lives sometimes look somewhat like a "wavy line" as we move through the teaching, reproof, correcting and training cycle of being on the right path, getting off the right path, and getting back on the right path and hopefully staying for longer periods of time on the right path. It is God's Word that **teaches, reproves, corrects** and **trains** us.

For example, a person might have a foul mouth and use words that are crude. **Ephesians 4:29-30** says, "²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

It is clear from these verses that a person is not to speak unwholesome words. As a person meditates on this passage, the truth begins to work its way into his value system and change his everyday speech. As it does, he gets on the right path with his words. If he then slips up and uses some unwholesome words, the Holy Spirit will prompt him by reproof (rebuking) him and letting him know he is going in the wrong direction. As the Spirit rebukes him, the person will hopefully say, "I'm sorry, Lord. Help me not take that detour again." At this point, the person chooses to be corrected and will get back on the right path and then stay there by continuing to please God more and more in the area of speech.

It equips us for every good work God wants us to do

2 Timothy 3:17 is a continuation of the above-mentioned cycle, and says, “So that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” The result of teaching, reproof, correction and training is that we are equipped for every good work that God has for us to do. Although Ephesians 2:8,9 makes it clear that we are saved by God’s grace through faith, Ephesians 2:10 makes it clear that we were created to do good works. Drawing close to God in His Word prepares us to do those good works.

It transforms us as it shows us God’s will

As stated earlier, every time we study and meditate on God’s Word, we renew our minds. As our minds are renewed, it helps us live out the truth in everyday life.

Other amazing benefits from being in God’s Word

Let’s look at several other benefits found in the book of Proverbs chapter two. Here a father instructs his son to receive his truth. Although the father says these are his own words, it is clear he is referring to God’s words that his son must seek. Listen now to **Proverbs 2:1-12,**

¹ My son, **if** you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you, ² Make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding; ³ for if you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; ⁴ if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵ **Then** you will discern the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *He is* a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸ guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones. ⁹ **Then** you

will discern righteousness and justice and equity *and* every good course. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ¹¹ discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you, ¹² to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things;

Let's make a simple chart of these verses which will help us understand them better and see the benefits they contain. Notice the verses contain a conditional statement. I call it an "If-then" statement. "If" you do these things, "then" these other things will naturally follow. The converse would also be true, "if you don't do these things then none of these good things will follow.

If Statements – "If you will..."

Pr 2:1	Receive	My words
Pr 2:1	Treasure	My commandments
Pr 2:2	Make your ear attentive	To wisdom
Pr 2:2	Incline your heart	To understanding
Pr 2:3	Cry	For discernment
Pr 2:3	Lift your voice	For understanding
Pr 2:4	Seek	Her as silver
Pr 2:4	Search	For her as for hidden treasure

Then Statements – "Then you will..."

Pr 2:5,9	Discern (distinguish or perceive something so you know and understand what it is.)	The fear of the Lord, righteousness, justice, equity and every good course.
Pr 2:5	Discover	The knowledge of God
Pr 2:11	Get discretion (know when to or when not to do or say something.)	It will guard you, understanding will watch over you.
Pr 2:12	Be delivered (to be saved from something bad that could hurt you)	From the way of evil and evil people.

Do you see what the writer is saying? It is really God saying these things to us. He is our Heavenly Father. He wants us to gain **discernment** so that we understand what it means to fear and follow Him. He wants us to **discover** the knowledge of God. He wants us to get **discretion** as we live and have that discretion guard us. He wants to **deliver** us from evil and the schemes of evil people.

Discernment, discovery, discretion, and deliverance. Do you want some of that in your life? I sure do, but it doesn't happen by accident. It happens as we draw close to God and **receive** His words, **treasure** His commandments, **make our ears attentive** to wisdom, **incline our ears** to understanding, **cry out** for discernment, **lift our voice** for understanding, and **seek and search** for these things as if they were buried treasure. Why? Because that is exactly what they are, treasure of the highest value!

Back in the book of Proverbs 2:6-8 we see more benefits of drawing close to God spiritually:

Pr 2:6	The Lord gives	Wisdom
Pr 2:6	From His mouth come	Knowledge and understanding
Pr 2:7	He stores up	Sound wisdom – for the upright
Pr 2:7	He is a	Shield – to those who walk in integrity
Pr 2:8	He	Guards – the paths of justice
Pr 2:8	He	Preserves – the way of His godly ones.

What awesome benefits: wisdom, knowledge, understanding, shielding, guarding, and our own preservation. Amazing! These are only a small number of the benefits of being in God's Word, the Bible.

The amazing benefits from prayer

There are also great benefits for spending time in prayer. Listen to the following:



God attends the prayers of righteous people

1 Peter 3:12 states, “FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER...” The idea is that God watches righteous people and is ready to answer their prayers.

God heals people through prayer

James 5:16 says, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” Here prayers of confession sometimes result in healing and can accomplish great things.

God answers prayer

In **Matthew 7:7-11** Jesus said,

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? ¹¹ "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!

Here God tells us to ask, seek and knock. He is ready to pour out His blessings on those who do. No wonder the Psalmist says in **Psalm 5:3**, “In the morning, O LORD, You will hear my voice; in the

morning I will order *my prayer* to You and *eagerly* watch.” Here the Psalmist prays eagerly and watches to see what God will do in response to his prayer.

After reading the above verses, why would anyone NOT WANT to pray?

The plan for drawing near

So, what is your plan?

Pick a time and place...

It is time to pick a place and time, to bring a Bible, note pad, and pen/pencil. It is time to choose what you believe God wants you to study. If you aren't quite sure, why not start with the PROVERBIAL HABIT? Read the chapter in the book of Proverbs that corresponds to the date of the month. Start with today's date. If it is the fifteenth, then turn to Proverbs chapter fifteen and start reading. As you read, ask God to show you what He wants you to see. Star, highlight and/or underline things that stand out to you. Take time to think deeply on what you read. If it is not clear to you how to apply the truth, ask God to help you. Perhaps star what you think is the key verse of the chapter and spend some time memorizing it. Let God's love and the many benefits you will receive, be your primary motivations.

How much time should you spend drawing near to God each day? That's between you and God. For me personally, I find it takes around 30 minutes. Each person must figure out what works best for them. Just remember, it is not a race to see how fast you can blast through spending time with God. As a friend recently said to me, "Sometimes we need to slow down in order to catch up with God."

The importance of accountability

It's also time to find someone to hold you accountable. Without accountability you very likely will not be very successful in drawing

near. If, however, you have an accountability person, your likelihood of success goes up dramatically. **Proverbs 27:17** states, “Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” A good accountability person is someone who loves God and is seeking to draw near to Him, too. Think about a friend in your life who fits this description and perhaps ask them if they would hold you accountable for spending time drawing near to God. They might even want you to do the same for them. I recommend that your accountability person be someone of the same sex as you, unless the person is your spouse.

Final thoughts

Let me leave you with a couple of thoughts. **1 Timothy 4:7,8** states,

⁷ But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;
⁸ for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.

God doesn't want people sitting around telling myths or worldly stories. Instead, He wants us to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness. Although physical exercise is important for this life, spiritual exercise is not only good for this life, but it prepares us for the life to come. No one can do this spiritual work for us! We each must do it for ourselves. We each need to discipline ourselves (be self-disciplined) in order to become more godly. Part of this process is being self-disciplined in drawing near to God.

Also, I really like what Job said in **Job 23:12**, “I have not departed from the command of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.” When we want to draw close to God more than we desire our daily food, then we will be at the place God wants us, and where He can use us mightily!

Drawing near to God is somewhat like getting closer to a huge mountain. From many miles away, the mountain may seem little more than an interesting anomaly on the horizon, but as a person gets closer and closer, the mountain seems bigger and more majestic. In reality, the mountain hasn't changed at all. It is just the viewer's perspective that has changed. As the details of the mountain become clearer and more defined, the "awe factor" in the observer grows to the point it can take his breath away. If he finally gets on the mountain and perhaps climbs or drives near the summit, he gains a whole new perspective, especially if he stops and looks around pondering where he has been and where he is going. That is what it was like for me the first time I saw and then got closer to Mt. Rainier near Tacoma, Washington and finally climbed on its slopes. It took my breath away! How much more, spending quality time drawing near to God!!!

At one time, God may have seemed little more than an anomaly on the horizon of our lives, but as we draw near to Him spiritually (through prayer and studying/meditating on His Word), His beauty, majesty, and awesome character will become clearer and sharper, and we will gain new perspective on our own lives and see our need to humble ourselves and obey Him as LORD and Savior.

If we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. Let's go for it! We'll be so glad we did!

Reflection Questions

1. How frequently do you spend quality time drawing close to God in prayer and the study of His Word, the Bible? (mark the appropriate response)
 - I don't do it regularly _____
 - 1-2 times a week _____
 - 3-4 times a week _____
 - 5-6 times a week _____
 - Every day _____
2. What time of day do you usually have your prayer and study time? Is it working for you or is there something you need to change?
3. Where do you usually do your prayer and study time? Is it relatively free of distractions?
4. What are you currently studying, and what is the average amount of time you spend in prayer and study? Do you feel rushed or does the amount of time seem right?

5. Do you have anyone holding you accountable in drawing near to God? If not, who could you ask this week to do so?

6. What is your main take away from this booklet?

7. Based on this booklet, do you feel led to make any changes in drawing near to God? If so, write the changes below and make them this week.

Notes:

