

Devotional Time in the Word

A. The Why -

Goal

My goal tonight is to stir our affections for the Lord Jesus so that we would not be shamed or guilt tripped into more time in the word but that we would desire spending time with Jesus and enjoy Him.

My hope is that bible reading might turn into meaningful devotion and sweet prayer as we reorient our hearts and learn to be satisfied with God and His word.

There are 8.2 Billion people living in the world today and they are all devoted to something. It's not a question of if, but what we are devoted to. Before Christ we were all devoted to something.

Rhythms of Grace -

I. Grace Before Rhythms:

Our devotion to Jesus is rooted in grace

The Gospel - Not religious duty

Time in the word, fellowship & prayer - Not dialed in efficiency

But Grace! - The unmerited favor of God in salvation.

Acts 2:37-42

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (ESV)

2,000 years later Redeemer Bible Church is just another church lining up with Acts 2. Somehow, each of us heard the gospel message and our lives changed and are changing! What we were devoted to changed and is changing! The only reason 120 of us would choose to show up in this building tonight is that God got a hold of our hearts and now we long to be devoted to the Lord Jesus.

If we reduce tonight down to a system of doing to result in habits being shaped we've missed the point of grace! The basis of our devotion is rooted in our salvation. So we celebrate grace with one another tonight!

Table Discussion:

Share with your neighbors how long you've been a Christian and if it were not for Jesus entering into your life, what would you be devoted to?

Take a couple minutes to discuss this with your neighbors right now...

II. Being Devoted to The Word = Devoted to Jesus

The Word was God - *John 1:1 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.*

Being devoted to the Word is never void of Jesus it is centered on Jesus.

The Word Became flesh - *John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Jesus came into this world to live a life like ours to die in our place. Jesus knows our human experience so we can run to him in our weakness and need

The Word is Water - *John 4:7-15 - but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.*

We run to Jesus because he offers living water and can satisfy our thirsty souls.

The Word is Bread - *John 6:47-51 - I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.*

We run to Jesus for salvation and for the constant nourishment that only he can provide.

The Word Gives Life - *John 5:39 - You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me*

John 6:66-69 - You have the words of eternal life

Our devotion to Jesus is rooted in his word, and in Him we have eternal life.

The Word is Light - *John 8:12 - I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*

Because of Jesus we no longer walk in darkness that leads to death but have the light of life!

The Word Sets You Free - *John 8:31-32 - If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*

As we devote ourselves to Jesus we follow him in truth and we find freedom in Him!

III. Being Devoted to Jesus = Obeying Jesus

Loving Obedience - John 14:15 - If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Knowing the Word - John 14:21 - He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me...

Joy in Loving Obedience - John 15:9-11 - As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandment, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

IV. Barriers to Devotion to Jesus = The Sin of Self-Sufficiency

Rhythms of Repentance - 1 John 1:6-9

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

A life devoted to Jesus is marked by rhythms of repentance. Maybe you're here tonight and you fell off the wagon again. You may be ashamed to admit it, but you haven't been reading your bible, you're feeling guilty with all this devotion talk and it took every ounce of faith to just walk in tonight. Brothers and Sister, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from that sin too! 1 John 1 is a place I land in the word often because I'm with you, passages like this one are meant to bring life and light back to your walk with Jesus. These words don't condemn the one who is honest about their sin before God, but they do condemn the one who says they have fellowship with God while they walk in darkness. If you need to you can begin a new rhythm of repentance right now. We have a whole class dedicated to confession in a couple weeks but don't wait till then, you can know the joy of repentance tonight!

Devotional Time in the Word

B. The How

We are now entering the subjective part of our lesson tonight. Hopefully, by now, we all understand the significant role regular rhythms of time play in our lives for the benefit of our souls. But what exactly are we talking about when we use the word Devotions?

Table Discussion:

At your table spend a couple minutes and discuss what are some the misconceptions you've heard over the word "Devotions".

As we saw in Acts 2:42 the new believers at Pentecost devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer, but it doesn't tell us exactly what they did to devote themselves to the apostles teaching?

I. Pray

First we pray. We do not come to the word like a science or math book looking to extract information to answer a problem or to gather data and store it away for later use. We come to God's Word ready to hear the very words of God. We come to be sustained by the words of life and to feast and be nourished by God's word at the level of our soul.

Bible reading is a spiritual endeavor, so we pray before we engage God's Word because we are never naturally prepared to meet with God. Our hearts are a mess! There is so much tangled up in our hearts that we must pray to ask God for help with our distracted, self-sufficient state so that we can submit ourselves to what he has for us in His Word.

I - INCLINE! *(Psalm 119:36-37) - Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain! Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.*

O- OPEN! *(Psalm 119:18) - Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.*

U- UNITE! *(Psalm 86:11) - Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.*

S- SATISFY! *(Psalm 90:14) - Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

Meeting not just reading.

If this prepares me for anything, it's for meeting with God and not just reading about God. As our hearts are inclined to the Word and our eyes turn from worthless things and are opened, we are preparing to meet with God. We can move from self seeking to God seeking and hope to be satisfied in Him and rejoice!

II. Read

First we pray, then we read.

Psalms - I personally start in the Psalms each morning, mainly because during my time in prayer, my heart is still not settled. The Psalms often confront me with the majesty of God and my need for Him.

Each morning I simply start off with a Psalm that corresponds to the date on the calendar. Yesterday was Psalm 19.

Psalm 19 Opens with "The heavens declare the Glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork."

Verses 1-6 is a wonderful picture of creation revealing God's glory, simply tracking the course of the sun from morning to evening is enough to marvel at God and know Him. So I stop and thank God for revealing himself through creation. As I consider the beauty of creation, my mind moves to imagining a world that is not stained by sin and it gave me a moment to ponder heaven again where creation will be perfect once again.

Verses 7-10 David moves from God's creation to God's Word. Each statement reveals an attribute of the Word that is worthy to pursue (It's perfect, sure, right, pure, clean & true). It also gives a great benefit to the reader who pursues such treasure (It revives the soul, makes wise the simple, rejoices the heart, enlightens the eyes, endures forever, righteous altogether).

So I stop and thank God for revealing himself through his Word. I'm encouraged to pursue truth find joy in His life giving Word.

Verses 11-14 David brings this song to his heart and his prayer is to be reminded of these great rewards and to let them serve as a warning to him so that he not be proud and sin against the Lord. It closes with "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

I'm no longer amazed at God in a general sense, David brings my attention to his Lord, and mine. We can both celebrate in knowing our Redeemer!

This is just a brief walkthrough of my time in the word - and Pastor Justin is going to close out our time tonight with a devotional from Psalm 119. Our encouragement to you is to try engaging with the word like this in your meeting time with the Lord.

Breathe

If there is any rhythm to remember from our lesson on rhythms of grace tonight it is the rhythm of breathing.

Pastor and Author Dane Ortlund says it this way: *"You wouldn't try to go through life holding your breath. So don't go through life without Bible reading and praying. Let your soul breathe. Oxygenate with the Bible; and breathe out the CO2 of prayer as you speak back to God your wonder, your worry, and your waiting. He is not a force, not an ideal, not a machine. He is a person. Keep open the channel between your little life and heaven itself through the Bible and prayer."* (Deeper pg. 125)

Reading Plans

There are so many reading plans to track with the bible during the year. We've linked several good reading plans in the notes for you to consider. The bottom line is this, find something that works for you and commit to meeting with the Lord each day to hear from his word. Find

ways to incorporate "breathing" because the reading plan is designed for God's word to change you, if you're not intentional here, your reading may result in literally just checking boxes each day.

Devotional Books

We've linked several devotional books that are helpful with your notes tonight, If I could make a pitch for 1 it would be New Morning Mercies by Paul David Tripp. Tripp has a way of challenging me to have gospel thoughts and leading me with curiosity to a passage to consider for the morning. If I only have 10 minutes in the morning I might pick this book up to settle my heart into truth before a crazy day.

Small Group Discussion Questions

1. How do we see David's devotion & delight in God connected to the Word of God in Psalm 119:1-16?
2. How could inhaling God's Word and exhaling in prayer help you engage with the Word tomorrow morning?
3. What can you take away from this week of LEAD School that would help you increase your joy and your devotion to God and His Word?