



A Heart for God

Christian Devotion

A Heart for God

Week 1 - Personal Devotional Life

Sandy Willson

Sermon Notes:

My Plan for Personal Worship

When:

Where:

How long:

Elements of personal worship:

Bible Reading Plan:

Study Guide:

Developing Intimacy with God

The greatest investment a follower of Christ can make is to spend time regularly developing personal intimacy with God.

Read

Genesis 1:26-27

In what way did God create us for intimacy with Him?

Deuteronomy 6:4-6

What primary relationship are we to pursue?

Matthew 22:36-38

What dimensions of our being are to be engaged?

John 17:3, 17

What does it mean to experience “eternal life” here/now?

Developing intimacy with God involves 2-way communication: listening/talking.

It is yours alone to develop. No one else can come between you and God.

It involves the same skills as other relationship building.

God is truly knowable and personal (Philippians 3:7-10)

The Bible is essential to developing intimacy with God

Read

2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Peter 1:19-21

How does God speak/communicate with us?

Hebrews 5:13-14

1 Peter 2:2-3

How do these describe the essential function of scripture in one's spiritual life?

Other ways in which the Bible is active in our lives:

Hebrews 4:12-13

Psalms 19:7-11

Psalms 119:9-16, 30-32, 67-68, 105, 130, 165-168

How Do I Start? Some Practical Suggestions

Be ready to:

- be committed to consistency (try it for a month)
- set aside specific time to invest (begin with 10-12 minutes a day)
- have a plan (it needs to be yours, but you need to have one)

As you begin:

- **Find a place** where all you do is meet with God (a room, a chair, etc)
Turn off your cell/PDA/computer/radio/TV
- **Choose a Time** We do what we schedule. Make an "appointment" with God. If possible, try first thing in the morning
- **Have a Plan** Use the Bible itself as your primary source

What do I do?

- Read** We recommend reading through the books of the Bible (a chapter a day?)
- If new to the Bible, begin in the New Testament Gospels
 - Reading schedules can be helpful to frame your time and progress.
 - Understand that God speaks through varying literary forms (narratives, letters, poetry) in scripture.
- Reflect** Take time to listen to what God is saying (think/reflect/digest)
Thoughtful personal reflection on Scripture catalyzes understanding/application
- Write** Use a notebook (only for your use)
Keep it simple/brief
Ask yourself:
What am I learning about God from this passage?
What should I do/change?
What do I want to remember (key verses, thoughts)?
What questions do I have?
Write the date. You will enjoy reviewing what you learn.
- Pray** This is your part of the 2-way communication. Prayer is simply talking to God.
- Worship** Use the Trinity (or other) Hymnal as a source of music and poetry to praise the Lord.

Developing a Personal Prayer Time

Suggestions:

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your prayers (Romans 8:26-27)

Begin with what you have just read from Scripture (where God is speaking to you today)

Respond to Him. You can use what you wrote today. Bring to God your thanks, confession, concerns, questions. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Pray for specific issues in your life (decisions, direction, needs, relationships, work/school)

Pray for events on your schedule today.

Prayer Journal

Eventually, you may find it helpful to keep a journal or list of your prayers.

A journal may serve several purposes:

- As an ongoing record of what God has done/is doing in your life
- As a place to organize a regular list of things you want to pray for.
- Develop your own list. Do not be legalistic or try to simply copy someone else's method.
- As your list grows, you may wish to rotate your prayers by categories, so as not to get "bogged down" on a daily basis.

- Categories could include:
 - family-specific people
 - personal requests
 - requests from others
 - problems/challenges
 - church
 - ministries
 - missionaries
 - pastors/leaders
 - unbelieving friends
 - government leaders
 - world/USA/city
 - military
 - ongoing illness
 - (others)

Let this develop over time. Just get started!

Notes

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Week 2 - Family Worship

Sandy Willson

Sermon Notes:

My Plan for Family Worship

When:

Where

How long:

Format

Bible Reading Plan:

Study Guide:

Developing Family Worship

Understanding a Biblical Pattern - Key Texts

“Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” Psalm 127:1

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Verse 5 **Our priority** - “Love the Lord your God...”
Do so wholeheartedly, comprehensively - “all... all... all...”

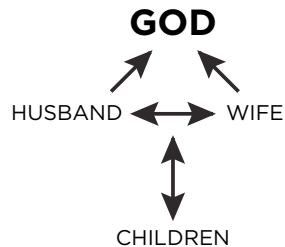
Verse 6 **Internalize truth** - “upon your hearts...”
Not merely academically or intellectually

Verse 7 **The first application of truth** is generationally, to the family - “teach them to your children.”

Verse 8-9 **Methodology** - modeling, observing, application-oriented

Indicates 3 dimensions of relationship with God:

- individual with God
- spouses/parents together to God
- parents toward children



Psalm 78:1-8, Proverbs 4

Note the importance of a generational transfer of truth.

Ephesians 6:4 - to Fathers/Parents

A command: “bring them up” (literally, “nourish with tender care”)

How?

“in the training” (literally, “discipline, child-training”) - hands-on

“and instruction” (literally, “admonition,” training by the word) - verbal

Summarize

From these texts, list the clear responsibilities of parents in family nurture:

What does “family worship” look like?

First, we should acknowledge that there is no structure for this prescribed for us in Scripture.

This should keep us from becoming wooden or dogmatic about methodology.

What is important is that couples commit together to establishing their approach, unique to themselves and their family.

Suggestions for Couples

Your spiritual life as a couple grows from your individual relationships with Jesus.

Talk together about your desires/expectations for your spiritual life together.

You have time for what you value - do not use lack of time as an excuse.

Begin by starting to pray regularly - it develops spiritual intimacy. Start simply. Brevity is fine - let it grow naturally.

Husbands, don't try to “fix” your wife. Listen to her heart. Pray with her.

Wives, know this is challenging for him. Encourage and trust him to Jesus.

Suggestions for Parents:

Commit to your approach together - time, expectations, methods.

Remember: Your children's earliest “school” for worship is your home.

Be realistic. Work within the rhythms of your own family life.

Keep it simple, focused, and brief.

Use interaction/engagement/good questions. Lectures and monologues are deadly.

Consider the unique learning/communication style of each child.

In everything, point their hearts toward a living relationship with Jesus.

Some Practicalities for Parents

As in our personal relationships with God, “Family Worship” should reflect a 2-way communication with Him: listening/hearing and speaking.

While we have no Biblically-prescribed methodology, there are elements that we can suggest:

- Be regular enough to be consistent. Impact is cumulative.
- It should be time together, when all the family can gather.
- Use the Bible as your primary resource: if you read, read in small segments (paragraphs?); read from a version that can be understood; allow kids to read (when able).
- Dad should take the initiative, but parents can share leading.
- Mix in creative resources:
 - object lessons
 - memory
 - children’s catechisms
 - seasonal opportunities (Advent, etc.)
 - biographies
 - missionary stories
 - (Talk to children and youth ministry leaders for suggestions)
- Pray together: for each child/family member
 - for issues of their lives and as a family
 - specifically for others’ needs (list?)
 - give thanks regularly for God’s works and grace
- Make prayer a natural conversation with God.
- Sing using the Trinity (or other) Hymnal.

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Week 3 - Corporate Prayer

Sandy Willson

Sermon Notes:

My Plan for Corporate Prayer at 2PC:

Study Guide: Corporate Prayer

Prayer and the Covenant Community

In week 1 of this study, we explored the dimension of personal prayer in the devotional life of the believer. This is an essential element of our privilege as adopted children, to come to our Heavenly Father in freedom and intimacy through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14-17, 26-27; Galatians 4:6-7).

As we gather in corporate worship, we also have opportunities for prayer within the framework of liturgy: we confess our sins corporately and privately; we are led in Prayers of Intercession; and our hearts are directed toward God in Prayers of Adoration and Thanksgiving, as well as in praying The Lord's Prayer.

Yet, there is one other dimension of prayer which was a clear pattern in the life of the early church: congregational prayer, in which the gathered church offered united, verbal prayers.

Our challenge in this study is to understand the place of this verbal, united prayer, and to challenge every member to be a part of this important ministry of the church.

“Nothing would be more unnatural than that the children of a family should always meet their Father separately, but never in the united expression of their desires or their love.”

– Andrew Murray

United, Corporate Prayer in the New Testament

Acts 4:24-31 - Linked with the effectiveness of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit's work

Proverbs 15:30-32
Ephesians 6:18-20
Colossians 4:3-4
II Thessalonians 3:1

Prayers of the united church are needed by preachers and for the preaching of the Gospel

Acts 1:14, 2:42, 12:5, 12 - United prayer was continual and urgent.

I Chronicles 16:36
Nehemiah 8:6
Psalm 106:48
Revelation 7:12

A verbal "Amen!" was expression of worship by the gathered people of God.

And, we may add our "Amen" to the prayers of others as we join our hearts with them.

"God sometimes stands upon a number of voices, for the carrying of some public mercy, because He delighteth in the harmony of many praying souls."

– John Flavel

Notes

Bibliography

(selected titles available at table)

Personal Devotional/Spiritual Disciplines

Scripture reading plans (copies available):

Robert Murray M'Cheyne - 1 yr, OT & NT (twice), Psalms (twice)
Straight Through the Bible - 1 yr, Genesis-Revelation in order
Selections from OT & NT - 1 yr

Prayer:

Praying With Jesus - Eugene Peterson
Praying with the Psalms - Eugene Peterson

Scripture Memory

Topical Memory System - Navpress
Fighter Verses - Desiring God Ministries

Devotions/Spiritual Disciplines

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life - Donald Whitney
Face to Face, Vol. 1 - Praying the Scriptures for Intimate Worship
- Kenneth Boa
Face to Face, Vol. 2 - Praying the Scriptures for Spiritual Growth
- Kenneth Boa
Disciplines of a Godly Man - R. Kent Hughes
Disciplines of a Godly Woman - Barbara Hughes
Celebration of Discipline - Richard Foster

Family Devotions

Read Aloud Bible Stories (4 volumes) - Ella K. Lindvall
The Jesus Story Book Bible - Sally Lloyd-Jones
Big Truths for Little Kids - Susan Hunt and Richie Hunt
Little Visits (3 volumes)
Family Devotions (2 volumes) - Josh McDowell
The Family Worship Book - Terry L. Johnson

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