

# Tips for the “Secret Life:” Collected Devotional Ideas

Ben Foust – XSI 2018

*We interviewed a number of veteran Christian workers about what works for them in their devotional time, here are some of their ideas collected:*

## **Helpful principles:**

- Make it a regular time– the idea is a *rhythm* of launching out and returning back. Ideas: morning before work, in the car on the way out in the morning, lunch break, stopping off on your way home, a walk after dinner, settling down for the evening, in bed
- Pick a spot: a place at home, the porch, a chair, a coffee shop, a walking path, a park, or have a notebook or journal that you take with you consistently to many places.
- Have some structure, but don’t let the time become all *about* the structure. Most importantly, it has to be a structure that works for you, that you will actually do and enjoy
- Start with small, do-able goals, and resist perfectionism, go for quality over quantity
- Take measures against distractions (a notepad to write down intrusive thoughts to return to later, noise canceling headphones, a secluded place, and turn the phone OFF!)
- Change it up! Experiment until you find what works for you. Ask other’s what they do and steal their ideas!
- Don’t get discouraged by ebbs and flows. If your time falls off, don’t sweat it. You have a standing invitation before the throne of grace.
- Talk about your time with other Christians (it’s rewarding and contagious)
- Include other’s-centered aspects in your time, aim to leave your time armed with specific goals or acts of service toward others.
- Lean against your bent by including elements you naturally neglect (intercession, honest sharing with God, biblical study, thanksgiving, etc.)

## **Study Ideas:**

- Reading biblical passages *aloud*
- structured study methods, (inductive methods, Discovery Bible Study), etc.
- reading the word with companion books or commentaries. A good starting place is *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stewart
- embarking on a study project (example: find all the references to the Holy Spirit in Acts, find and study all of the times Paul expresses thanks for his audience)
- devise your own study method. Example: memorize the outline of a biblical book by making a card with paragraph titles for each chapter
- write your own mini-commentary. Work through a book with biblical text on the top of the page, and your own personal reflections, notes, and insights on the bottom of the page.
- read through a section of scripture with an eye for something in particular. Example: “highlight all the promises in this section in blue”

- Memorization is a very rewarding way to use your time. Consider apps like *Scripture Typer* to assist.
- choose a verse from your study, write it on a post it note, stick it to your steering wheel. Once you have it memorized, replace it with a new one.
- Meditation: choose a verse or short passage. Memorize it. Recite it to yourself in the “seams” of the day for several days, asking God for insight, conviction, and application.
- scholarly challenges: keep a list of challenging questions about scripture that perplex you, and devote times to tracking down answers through study.
- some find it motivating to set specific study goals and check them off as they go. Just make sure not to let your time become about the goals instead of relating with God.
- set simple habit-forming goals. “no matter how tired I am, I can always read at least ONE verse before I go to bed.” “find an opportunity to talk about the content of my study with someone else today.”
- find a peer and agree to embark on the same study concurrently. That way you can talk about your experience later when you are together. Also helps for accountability.
- listen to audio bible or teaching series in the car or during exercise

- following ready-made devotional readings

**A few recommendations:**

*My Utmost for His Highest*, Oswald Chambers  
*Calvary Road*, Hession  
*Insight for Living*, Swindoll  
*New Morning Mercies*, Tripp  
*Streams in the Desert*, L.B. Cowman  
*She Reads Truth* (app)  
*Choosing Gratitude* devotional, Nancy Leigh DeMoss  
*Write the Word Journal*, Lara Casey  
*Praying One Year Through the Bible* (app)  
*One Year Book of Devotions for Women*, Jill Briscoe  
*Jesus Calling*, Sarah Young  
*We Shall See God*, Randy Alcorn  
*Diamonds in the Dust*, Joni Eareckson

- following ready-made bible reading plans

**A few recommendations:**

*For the Love of God*, D.A Carson  
*Moody 3 Yeah Plan*  
*M'Cheyne Reading plan*  
*Discipleship Journal Bible Plan*  
*DailyAudioBible* (app)

## Prayer Ideas:

- Find the mode of prayer that is most effective for focused connection with God. For some this is sitting quietly, for others this is walking in nature, others find praying aloud essential. Many keep a prayer journal, and find it to be a virtual necessity for their prayer life. Experiment.
- Structured prayer can be immensely helpful for some. Work your way through *Praise, Thanksgiving, Confession, Requests, Intercession* in a set amount of time.
- prayers! Some find it helpful to organize requests and intercessions into categories.
- Prayer walk: walk a distance praying in a way that comes natural to you, and devote the walk back to a form of prayer that is more challenging. Example: "Walk as far as you want in lament, but dedicate the entire walk back to giving thanks." Or "Walk as far as you want praying about your own life, and dedicate the walk back to intercession for others."
- Make a prayer list that you work through regularly. Make sure to note and give thanks for answered - "pray through" passages of scripture by stopping after each verse to give thanks, converse with God, and consider personal application
- Prayer cards: make file cards for topics you want to remember to pray for. As your "deck" grows, you can say "today I am going to draw 3 cards and pray for them."
- Focused prayer: choose a small number of simple prayers with a goal of hitting them each day. Example: write down the names of 5 people in your life who do not know God, and resolve to give 5 minutes of your time to pray for them daily.
- Assign a different subject of prayer for each day of the week. Example: Mondays I pray for my family, Tuesdays I pray for my church, Wednesdays I pray for foreign missions, etc.
- Personalize sections of scripture by replacing pronouns with yourself. Example: Eph1:3 "Blessed be YOU, God, who has blessed ME with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as YOU chose ME in Him before the foundation of the world, that I would be holy and blameless before YOU."
- Spiritual music / singing, especially with lyrics from scripture
- Dedicate a devotional session to another individual person. "The next 30 minutes, Lord, I want to focus on \_\_\_\_." (my spouse, a disciple, an enemy, a lost person, someone who is in the midst of a trial, etc). Focus your prayer and study on gaining insight, vision, burden, or something to communicate to them when you launch out.
- Prayerfully write a short encouragement note to another brother or sister during your devotional time.
- Commit to keeping at several long-term intercessions, that may take years to answer. Example: one mother we interviewed said she prays regularly for the future-spouse of her young daughter.
- Devote a time to having an honest check-in with God, and invite him to search your heart. "How am I really doing these days? What is troubling or confusing me? What steps are you calling me to take that I have been ignoring? Make sure to leave time to *listen*."
- Don't be afraid to lament. Honestly "pour out the contents of your mind and heart," without worrying about being "correct." Then, you can begin applying truth and asking God to transform your thinking.
- Devote a session to working through a tough or confusing issue in your life or in the life of another. Talk with God about his perspective, and try on various solutions in his presence. Work toward a practical step you can take.