



A farmer was showing his visiting friend from the city around his farm. "Watch this!" he said. He gave a whistle and his little dog came running from the house, herded the cattle into

the corral, and then latched the gate with her paw.

"Wow, that's some dog — what's her name?"

The farmer thought for a minute and then asked, "What do you call that red flower that smells good and has thorns on the stem?" "A rose?" "That's it!" The farmer turned to his wife. "Hey Rose, what do we call this dog?" How well do you know God? When it comes to God, are you like the farmer in the story who couldn't even remember his wife's name? How do we grow in our understanding of who God is and His desire for us? One of the ways is through devotions.

## What are devotions?

The phrases "doing devotions" or "having devotions" may sound foreign or weird. These phrases are simply ways people describe spending time with God by reading the Bible and praying.

## Why bother to read the Bible?

Isn't the Bible an out of date book of fairy tales? I mean, really a man swallowed by a whale and thrown back up!! Disney's been there, done that. Anyway, what am I supposed to "learn" from that? We believe that the bible isn't a fairy tale, rather that it really is the word of God and the events in the Bible really did take place (yes, including the guy swallowed by the whale). So what does reading the Bible and praying daily do for us? Here are 6 reasons why we need to have a regular personal devotion time with God.

## Soul Exercise

What do you do to get in physical shape?



Run \_\_\_\_\_

Eat junk food \_\_\_\_\_

Drink Alcohol \_\_\_\_\_

Walk \_\_\_\_\_

Video Games \_\_\_\_\_

Swim \_\_\_\_\_

Watch TV \_\_\_\_\_

Lift Weights \_\_\_\_\_

Biking \_\_\_\_\_

Nothing \_\_\_\_\_

We exercise our bodies to increase strength, endurance, promote general health, and keep weight off. If you neglect exercise what can happen to your body?

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Devotions are like exercise for our soul. It forces our attention off of selfish distractions and pursuits and puts our focus on God's purposes and promises.

How are you getting in shape spiritually right now? (List what you are doing)

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Read and write a short paragraph about what you think these verses are saying: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

## Soul Shaping



Relationships change people. But the amount of change depends on the amount of time and energy you give to your relationships.

Think about some of your relationships. How have some of these relationships changed you as a person either for better or for worse? List a few examples.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The body will generally take the shape of how we exercise it. (And yes, round is a shape) Running shapes the body one way; weight training shapes it another way. The same is true for the soul. Our soul will conform to the way we exercise (or don't exercise) it. This is why changing your exercise routine can be helpful.

What are some ways that you can exercise and strengthen your personal faith (besides club or church) so that you become stronger in your relationship with God?

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Here are some other ideas...

Read through the Bible one year.

Focus on one book and memorize it another year.

Take a few months to focus on and pray through texts related to an area of special concern.

Make and update a list of things to pray for or about.

Read and write a short paragraph about what you think this verse is saying: Romans 12:2

# Bible Saturation

Have you ever felt overwhelmed and unprepared for an event in your life whether you were expecting it or not?  
How did you deal with the situation?

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Did anything prepare you to deal with the situation?

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How could having a consistent devotional life have helped you in your situation?

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Reading and studying the Bible will increase your overall Biblical knowledge and will help you during difficult times in your life. The longer you consistently do devotions the greater the ability you will have to draw strength and guidance from the Bible and apply God's wisdom to life. Especially during difficult times or times of temptation.

Read each of the follow passages and write a description of what God's Word says about spending time reading the Bible.

1. Psalms 119:11

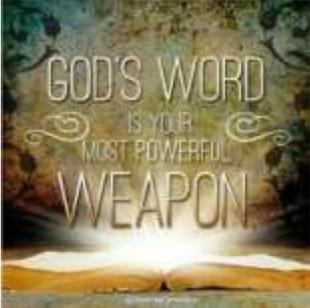
2. Psalms 119:72

3. Psalms 119:81

4. Proverbs 23:12

5. James 4:8

When a person enlists in the military they are not prepared to go to the front lines immediately, they must go through training first to prepare them for what they might encounter. Even when they finally are sent to an active war zone, they still need to continually practice, exercise, and train to be prepared for whatever they may encounter. In fact, Marines undergo rigorous training in order to so ingrain their weapons knowledge that when suddenly faced with the chaos of combat they instinctively know how to handle their weapons.



As a Christ follower, you need to be familiar with your weapon, the word of God.

How is the Bible like a weapon?

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Read and write a short paragraph about what you think this verse is saying: Hebrews 4:12

How familiar are you with the Bible? Can you name 5 Bible Characters or 5 books of the Bible? Have you ever memorized any verses?

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Read and write a short paragraph about what you think these verses are saying: Ephesians 6:10-17



## Sight Training

Jesus really does want us to have an active relationship with Him. But only the eyes of faith can see him.

Have you ever heard the term "blind faith"? What do you think is meant by the phrase "blind faith"?

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"Blind faith" is a contradiction, at least biblically. Faith is not blind. Unbelief is blind. Read each of the following and write a short paragraph about what you think these verses are saying.

1. John 9:38–41.

Faith is seeing a reality that physical eyes can't see and believing it.

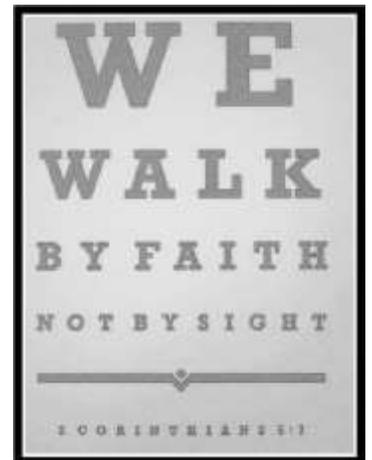
2. 1 Peter 1:8.
3. Romans 10:17

So if we're going to have a relationship with Jesus, we must see him in the word he speaks.

Faith is a gift.

4. Ephesians 2:8

And like most of God's gifts, they are intended to be used. Daily devotions are an important way to train our faith-eyes to see the glory of Jesus in his word and training our emotions to respond to what our faith-eyes see.



# Deepened Relationship

Who are you closest to in your life? (List 6 people)

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What did you do to get to be so close to them?

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At one time in your life you made a conscious choice to get to know these people better, and to make them an important part of your life. The only reason that you are close to the people you listed is because you decided to spend time with them and get to know them better. You didn't do it because you had to, but because you wanted to.

Realize that devotions have to be a choice. If we have a relationship based on a "have to" then it is more like a work relationship than a love relationship. Devotions have to be based on love. We should want to know More about Christ. Do you desire a close relationship with Him? If so, it takes commitment.

**A final thought: Devotion or "devotions"**

While devotions are an important essential part of our relationship with Christ it is only a part. As a Christ follower we are called to live a life of devotion to God. All that we are, in every area of our life and in everything that we do should reflect our devotion to God. As we have just finished talking about setting aside a specific time to "do devotions" are we also focused on living a life of devotion.

# Application

God's Word is not to be taken casually. Read James 1:22-25. If we believe spending time with God is important, then we better do it. When will you do it? What time of the day and where will go do it? How much time will you give to God? We spend a lot of time playing, watching TV, doing one or more of our hobbies, but are we willing to give God just 10% of our non-sleeping and working time? Are we willing to give Him 15 minutes a day?

Answer the following questions...

1. What is the best time of the day for me to spend with God reading His Word and Praying?
2. Where is the best place for me to do this?
3. How much time will I give Him?
4. What will I pray about and where in the Bible will start reading?