



Seeking His Face
A Journey Complete...Or is It?

WEEK 9
DEVOTIONAL LIFE: SEEKING HIS FACE DAILY
TALK





What if someone told you that one year from now you could look back over twelve months of consistent spiritual growth? Would you want that? Your sincere wanting to see this happen for a fact is the best fruit that can be accomplished by the Revival process. The Christian's devotional life is foundational to his or her spiritual maturity and capacity to know God and to make Him known to others. A personal devotional life involves more than just "having devotions." It is a call to devotion—an opportunity to cultivate an intimate love relationship with God. Devotion is the other face of the coin, the first being Holiness: those who have decided to be set apart for God are devoted to Him. Their main concern is growing spiritually day after day.

First Things First

In spite of all our time-saving devices and modern technology, many people today struggle with feeling perpetually hurried, frazzled, stressed-out, over-busy over-committed, and overwhelmed. Let's listen to king David testimony whose life was anchored to a steadfast determination: *"One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple"* (Psalm 27:4). Does this verse ring a bell? We recite it every day in the Agpeya matins prayer, as the Church reminds us of where our focus should be with every new day God gives us.

Getting Started

The key concept is spending quality time with God every day. . Don't try to squeeze your personal devotional time into an already overcrowded schedule; instead, start planning your day around your time with the Lord. God needs to know He is number one on your list of priorities "But one thing is needed" as He taught Martha in Luke 10:41.

Start Now. Putting it off is like tomorrow that never comes. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, *"Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."* Acts 24:25. Do you think Felix ever had that 'convenient' time to listen to the Word of God? I seriously doubt it.



Be consistent. The best time to sit at Jesus feet is in the morning before engaging in any other activity. We need to fine tune our guitar before playing on it and not after. Still, don't let that stop you. Any proper time for you when you will be least distracted is fine. Just be consistent.

Choose a plan. The church has prepared a very useful daily guideline for devotions, but you can set your own and follow it. The idea is to be exposed to God's word on a daily basis.

Integrate other activities. Praising, singing hymns, writing notes, memorizing verses from your today's readings are all means of helping the Word of God sink in down your heart.

The Word of God

The longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119 is a warm tribute to the Word of God. Each stanza has eight lines, each of which starts with the same letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The 22 stanzas form an acrostic, using the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet consecutively. It is so beautiful that the church put it in its entirety in the first hour of midnight Agpeya prayer as if telling us that we should start our day and finish it with the Word of God. How often have we read those verses without being least touched by how a Godly heart can want to eat up God's Word: *"Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts"*. Jeremiah 15:16.

What Should We Do?

In Ezra, we find a biblical example of a man who was intentional about getting to know God through His Word. According to Ezra 7:10, this was not something he took lightly: Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel. Three verbs are the answer: Study the Word of God, do it and teach it. Their order is of importance as you can not do what you haven't learnt or teach what you haven't done. Take your time in studying the Scripture. As it sinks in, you will be doing it without effort, and you will long to share it with others; thus teaching it.

A consistent intake of Scripture (reading, memorizing, meditating,



studying, etc.) can have both a corrective and a preventive result. God's Word can instruct us, confront wrong thinking or behavior, correct and redirect us when we're wayward, and equip us for service in His kingdom (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The whole of humankind's accumulated knowledge cannot compare to the pure and plain wisdom of God's holy Word. Above all, it is through the written Word, illuminated by the Spirit of God, that we come to know Christ, the Living Word, in a deep and personal way. Your relationship with Christ will never be any greater than your relationship with His Word! What a loss it is to deprive ourselves of the abundant riches that are readily available in His Word.

Get Connected!

Take time today to do what Mary did in Luke 10—to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to His Word. You may already have a method or plan selected to guide you in your personal devotions. If not, the following suggestions can help you get started. Of course, don't feel obligated to follow this outline. There is no "right way" to have your devotional time—the goal is to cultivate a relationship with God, not to check your devotions off your "to do" list!

A. Prepare Your Heart

- "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!" (Psalm 100:4). Worship Him; praise Him for who He is; express thanksgiving for what He has done.
- Ask God to show you anything that could hinder your fellowship and communion with Him. Confess any sin He brings to mind. Ask God to quiet your heart, to open your ears, and to speak to you through His Word. Ask His Holy Spirit to be your Teacher. *"Open my eyes that I may see Wonderful things in your law. Give me understanding, And I will keep your law. And obey it with all my heart."* (Psalm 119:18,34)

B. Listen to God

Select a chapter or a passage of Scripture. (Ideally, make a practice of reading consecutively through entire books or sections of the Bible in your devotional time.) Read through the passages thoughtfully and prayerfully. Underline or highlight key words, phrases, or verses that stand out to you.



C. Respond to God

A meaningful devotional life is a dialogue; we allow God to "speak" through His Word and the promptings of His Holy Spirit. Then we respond to Him with love, gratitude, faith, surrender, and obedience. Prayer allows us to commune with God through praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, petition for our needs, and intercession for the needs of others. Our devotional life can become the time and place where our most important decisions are made. What better place than in the quiet, holy, secure, and intimate presence of our heavenly Father?

Final Benediction

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 2, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)
Let those verses be in front of your eyes as you seek Him daily, trust His Holy Spirit to affect needed changes in your heart. Be still and know He is God Almighty.

Enjoy the ride!



Seeking His Face **A Journey Complete...Or is It?**

WEEK 9 DEVOTIONAL LIFE: SEEKING HIS FACE DAILY DISCUSSION

Think about it: You could be walking more closely with God than ever before. You could be enjoying a deeper awareness of His love for you and your love for Him. You could be walking in greater freedom over sin. Your life could be bearing the fruit of the Spirit and God would be using you as an instrument of His grace in others' lives. How badly would you want that? The Christian's devotional life is foundational to spiritual maturity and capacity to know God and to make Him known to others. The essence of devotion is to spend quality time with God each and every day and making it a priority. As we read David's words in Psalm 42 *"As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"* We feel so guilty as so many things have occupied our heart that the Word of God and longing for Him has moved down to the bottom of our list of interests. It's time to change that.

Memory Verse

"One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

Discussion Questions

1) Read Luke 10:38-42. How were Martha's priorities different from Mary's priorities? How did Martha's priorities and choices affect her response to pressure, to her family, and to Jesus? What is the "one thing" Mary chose that, according to Jesus, is the only absolutely necessary priority?



2) What are some of the symptoms that we may have been neglecting our personal relationship with Jesus? What can we do about it?

3) What changes do you need to make in your schedule, your lifestyle, or your priorities to allow you to spend adequate time "sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him speak"?

4) Read Ezra 7:10. What three things did Ezra set his heart to do in relation to the Word of God? How does Ezra's heart for God's Word compare with your attitude toward the Word? Is your heart set toward the Word of God? Which of these three things above do you need to set your heart to do more consistently?

Live the Message

Put in your heart to start your day sitting at Jesus' feet. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you get started and make a plan for daily devotions. Be consistent. Share your experience with your group next time. Be accountable to each other so as not to lose heart.

Praise: The Wonderful Cross

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow & love flow mingled down:
Did e'er such love & sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Oh the wonderful cross, oh the wonderful cross
Bids me come and die and find that I may truly live
Oh the wonderful cross, oh the wonderful cross
All who gather here by grace draw near, And bless Your name

Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!



Seeking His Face **A Journey Complete...Or is It?**

DEVOTIONAL LIFE: SEEKING HIS FACE DAILY WEEK 9, DAY 2 FIRST THINGS FIRST

KEY POINT: Cultivating an intimate relationship with God should be the number one priority for every believer and requires taking time to "sit at Jesus' feet" and "listen to His Word."

In spite of all our time-saving devices and modern technology, many

people today struggle with feeling perpetually hurried, frazzled, stressed-out, over-busy over-committed, and overwhelmed. This week's memory verse (Psalm 27:4) is the testimony of a man (King David) whose life was anchored in a steadfast determination: *"If I don't get anything else accomplished in my day, the one thing I will pursue above all else is to know God and develop a relationship with Him."* In a familiar passage in Luke's Gospel, we encounter two sisters, one of whom understood (and the other needed to learn) the importance of keeping "first things first." Read the passage below and then meditate on it by answering the questions that follow: *"Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.'" And Jesus answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.'" (Luke 10:38-42)*

1) How "were Martha's priorities different from Mary's priorities?"



2) How did Martha's priorities and choices affect her response to pressure, to her family, and to Jesus?

3) What is the "one thing" Mary chose that, according to Jesus, is the only absolutely necessary priority?

4) What are some of the symptoms that we may have been neglecting our personal relationship with Jesus? What can we do about it?

5) Martha was distracted, "pulled apart," by all her meal preparations. What are some of the things that distract you and keep you from "sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to Him"?

6) Check the following words/phrases that best describe your personal devotional life prior to starting this study.

- A privilege
- Consistent
- A delight
- Fellowship with God
- A joy
- Spiritually nourishing
- Spiritual life-line
- Non-existent
- A chore
- An obligation
- A duty
- Going through motions
- Dry
- Routine



7) If you checked any boxes on the right side, identify some of the obstacles that have kept you from developing a meaningful devotional life.

- Too busy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Too many distractions
- No real desire
- Don't know how
- Didn't realize the need
- I get my spiritual nourishment from church, attending a Bible study, or media (Christian radio, TV, or Internet)
- Other:

8) What changes do you need to make in your schedule, your lifestyle, or your priorities to allow you to spend adequate time "sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him speak"?

Getting Started in a Personal Devotional Life

The whole idea of spending time alone with God each day may be new to you. Or it may be something you have done in the past. Here are some suggestions to help you develop (or re-start) a daily devotional time with God.

Set the priority. Don't try to squeeze your personal devotional time into an already overcrowded schedule; instead, start planning your day around your time with the Lord.

Make the commitment. If we don't do it today, we probably won't do it tomorrow ... or next week ... or next month. Soon another year will have passed, and we will have missed all those opportunities for spending time alone with God and developing an intimate relationship with Him. As you begin taking steps to develop a consistent devotional life, find someone you trust and ask him or her to hold you accountable to your commitment. Share what God is teaching you and how you are growing through your time with Him.

A 30-Day Challenge

If you have made it this far in Seeking His Face, you have already



been enjoying some of the benefits of consistent time in God's presence. Continuing your personal devotional time is crucial to sustaining the work God has been doing in your heart through the course of this study and to enjoying an even deeper level of intimacy with Him in the days ahead.

Whether you already have an established devotional habit or are just getting started, consider making the following commitment: By God's grace, out of a desire to know Him more intimately, I purpose to spend some time alone with the Lord in His Word and in prayer, every day for the next thirty days.

Date

Signed

Be consistent. Many people have discovered that it is ideal (though not necessarily easy!) to start the day in the Word and prayer, before their minds are drawn into other activities and responsibilities. There is ample precedent in Scripture for a "morning quiet time." However, the time of day is not as important as consistency. Select a time and setting where you can meet God regularly and won't be easily interrupted or distracted.

Choose a plan. Many helpful books and devotional guides are available at your Orthodox bookstore. One of these tools or some type of Bible reading plan may help you get started. Your priest or a respected Christian friend may offer suggestions. Find a plan, method, or tool that works best for you based on your make-up, season of life, and spiritual maturity.

Integrate other activities. Your devotional life should consistently include time in the Word, prayer, and worship. However, at times, you may want to incorporate other activities, such as:

- keeping a journal
- praying about and making important decisions
- writing notes of thanks and encouragement
- arranging or rearranging your schedule (praying about what to do and when)
- singing hymns and praise choruses
- giving to others (determining what, how much, to whom, and so forth)
- memorizing verses



Seeking His Face
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DEVOTIONAL LIFE: SEEKING HIS FACE DAILY
WEEK 9, DAY 3
THE WORD OF GOD

Consistent intake of the Scripture into our minds, hearts, and lives is essential to sustain spiritual life.

Those who love and follow God's Word will be blessed—that is the theme of Psalm 119.

"Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD! Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart"

1) Circle the words in the verses above that describe the response we should have to God and to His Word.

2) What does each of the following verses from Psalm 119 tell us about the benefits or blessings we can derive from God's Word?

Psalm 119: Blessings Found Through God's Word

"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Your testimonies are my . . . counselors. My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! I find my delight in your commandments, which I love. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through your precepts I get understanding therefore I hate every false way."

In Ezra, we find a biblical example of a man who was intentional about getting to know God through His Word. According to Ezra 7:10, this was not something he took lightly: *"Ezra had set his*



heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel."

3) What three things did Ezra set his heart to do in relation to the Word of God?

Ezra did not have a casual attitude toward God's Word. He was serious about studying and meditating on it, obeying it, and reproducing it in the lives of others.

4) How does Ezra's heart for God's Word compare with your attitude toward the Word? Is your heart set toward the Word of God? Which of these three things above do you need to set your heart to do more consistently?

A consistent intake of the Bible (reading, memorizing, meditating, studying, etc.) can have both a corrective and a preventive result. God's Word can instruct us, confront wrong thinking or behavior, correct and redirect us when we're wayward, and equip us for service in His kingdom (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The whole of humankind's accumulated knowledge cannot compare to the pure and plain wisdom of God's holy Word.

Above all, it is through the written Word, illuminated by the Spirit of God, that we come to know Christ, the Living Word, in a deep and personal way. Your relationship with Christ will never be any greater than your relationship with His Word! What a loss it is to deprive our-selves of the abundant riches that are readily available in His Word.

Reading God's Word is the starting place for developing a growing relationship with Him. But Ezra's life illustrates that we need to do more than just read the Word.



5) According to the following verses, what else is needed in order for the Word to have the maximum impact and effect in our lives? Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2, Psalm 119:56; Ezekiel 33:31-32; James 1:22 Hebrews 4:2

6) Write a brief prayer thanking God for His Word and expressing your heart's desire to be filled with His Word and to enjoy rich fellowship with Him through His word.



Seeking His Face **A Journey Complete...Or is It?**

DEVOTIONAL LIFE: SEEKING HIS FACE DAILY WEEK 9, DAY 4 FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take time today to do what Mary did in Luke 10—to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to His Word. You may already have a method or plan selected to guide you in your personal devotions. If not, the following suggestions can help you get started. Of course, don't feel obligated to follow this outline. There is no "right way" to have your devotional time—remember, the goal is to cultivate a relationship with God, not to check devotions off your "to do" list!

A. Prepare Your Heart

- "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise!" (Psalm 100:4). Worship Him; praise Him for who He is; express thanksgiving for what He has done.
- Ask God to show you anything that could hinder your fellowship and communion with Him. Confess any sin He brings to mind.
- Ask God to quiet your heart, to open your ears, and to speak to you through His Word. Ask His Holy Spirit to be your Teacher.

Commit yourself to obey whatever He shows you. You may want to pray these prayers from the Bible: "*Open my eyes that I may see Wonderful things in your law. Give me understanding, And I will keep your law And obey it with all my heart.*" (Psalm 119:18,34, Niv) "*Show me your ways, O LORD, Teach me your paths; Guide me in your truth and teach me, For you are God my Savior, And my hope is in you all day long.*" (Psalm 25:4—5, Niv) "*That which I see not teach thou me: If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*" (Job 34:32, KJV)

B. Listen to God

Select a chapter or a passage. (Ideally, make a practice of reading consecutively through entire books or sections of the Bible in your



devotional time.) Read through the passages thoughtfully and prayerfully. Underline or highlight key words, phrases, or verses that stand out to you. There are many different approaches to reading and meditating on the Scripture. Here's a simple method that many people have found useful. (Even children can do this, some as young as nine or ten.) All you need is your Bible, a pen, and a blank notebook or journal (or you may prefer to use your computer).

The "S-A" (Summary-Application) Method: Write, your own brief "commentary" on the Scripture. As you read each chapter, record the following:

- Summary: One or two sentences summarizing the chapter ("What does this passage say?")
- Application: One or two sentences of personal application, expressing how something in that chapter can be applied to your life; how it spoke to you personally. ("What does this passage mean for me? What should I do?") The application should be personal and might include promises to claim, warnings to heed, truths to obey, attitudes/behaviour to adjust, and so on.

C. Respond to God

A meaningful devotional life is a dialogue; we allow God to "speak" through His Word and the promptings of His Holy Spirit. Then we respond to Him with love, gratitude, faith, surrender, and obedience. Prayer allows us to commune with God through praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, petition for our needs, and intercession for the needs of others. Our devotional life can become the time and place where our most important decisions are made. What better place than in the quiet, holy, secure, and intimate presence of our heavenly Father?

During and/or following your time in the Word, respond to God in prayer and praise

1) Agree with Him about what He has revealed to you in His Word. Surrender your will to obey His commands and to follow through with any steps He is leading you to take; confess any sin He has shown you; claim any promises He has made through His Word.



2) Praise and worship Him for what He has revealed about His heart, character, and ways.

3) Bring your needs before Him. Ask God to show you how to pray for those needs in accordance with His will, as it is revealed in His Word.

4) Bring the needs of others before Him. As He prompts, pray for your family, church, community, nation, and the advancement of His kingdom throughout the world.

Close your time today by personalizing this week's memory verse and praying it back to the Lord: *"One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple."*(Psalm 27:4)



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DEVOTIONAL LIFE: SEEKING HIS FACE DAILY
WEEK 9, DAY 5
WHERE TO FROM HERE?

KEY POINT: Whatever it takes to get revival is what it takes to keep it.

"You who seek God, let your hearts revive" (Psalm 69:32b).

Have you been "Seeking His Face" through the course of this study? If so, God has promised to revive your heart! You may already be experiencing many of the blessings and joys of personal revival.

How has God revived your heart through this study? Take time to consider and record your response to that question. (If you are going through this study with a group, you will have an opportunity to share your answer when you meet together.) Where were you spiritually when you started Seeking His Face? How has God changed you? Is there a particular truth (e.g., humility, honesty, clear conscience, forgiveness, sexual purity) that has especially affected your life? Explain.

At this point you may be wondering, Where do I go from here? I don't want to lose the revival God has begun in my heart over the past twelve weeks. Remember this: Whatever it takes to get revival is what it takes to keep it. The basic truths that God has been using to set you free during these past weeks—humility, repentance, honesty, holiness, obedience, clear conscience, forgiveness, walking in the Spirit—are the same truths that will enable you to experience continuous revival. That's why it's important for you to keep going back to these same foundational principles—again and again and again—and to engraft them into



your mind, heart, and life. Periodically review the key points in each lesson; go through the "Making It Personal" exercises from time to time, to make sure you are still walking in the truth that sets us free.

As you continue to walk with God, ask Him how you can be used as an instrument of revival. Find one or two like-hearted Christians and begin to pray together for revival in your homes, your church, your community, and in our world. Share with others what God is doing in your heart and life. Consider going through this study again with one or more people you know who have a desire to seek the Lord and to experience the joy of personal revival.

A Benediction

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20-21)

How does this benediction encourage you regarding the ongoing process of revival in your life?

How does it give you hope as you pray and believe God for an outpouring of His Spirit in revival in our world?

1) Do you generally identify more with Martha or Mary in the passage we considered in Luke 10? In what way(s)?

2) Can you think of someone whose example has been a challenge and motivation to you in this matter of a personal devotional life?



3) Based on what you have studied in this lesson, what are some of the positive benefits and blessings of having a consistent devotional life? Why does this need to be a priority for every believer?

4) What hurdles or obstacles have you experienced in relation to your personal devotional life? Share any practical insights that have been helpful to you in overcoming those obstacles and developing a meaningful devotional life.

5) Why is a personal devotional life so vital to experiencing ongoing personal revival?

6) Pair off with another person and share with each other any commitments you made while doing this lesson. Agree on how you can help hold each other accountable over the next thirty days for whatever God has put on your heart in relation to your personal devotional life.



7) Reconvene as a group for a time of rejoicing in God's goodness. How has God revived your heart and changed your life through this study? Is there a particular truth—humility, honesty, clear conscience, forgiveness, sexual purity or other—that has especially impacted your life? Explain.

Spend some extended time in prayer—either as a whole group or in smaller groups of two to four people. Allow the Spirit to direct your prayer time. Pray brief prayers so all those who wish can pray aloud as many times as they are led.

- Praise God for what He has taught you about His heart and ways, and for what He has done in your hearts and lives over these weeks.

- Pray for each other. Pray regarding any struggles you may be aware of that others are experiencing in their walk with God (use discretion). Pray that in the days ahead each person in your group will continue to seek the Lord and to experience the joy and freedom of personal revival.

- Pray for a great moving of God's Spirit in genuine revival—in your homes, your church(s), in our nation, and throughout the world.



Suggestions for Group Leaders

If the discussion is going to flow smoothly and time is going to be well spent, each group needs a leader. That could be you. But don't worry! The leader for this kind of study is really more of a facilitator than a teacher. As a Facilitator, you will provide suggestions and guidance to keep the group on track during the meeting. You will also raise questions to spark discussion.

If you've been designated the leader, consider enlisting an assistant or co-leader to help you. This person can help with contacting members, give valuable feedback, and substitute for you if you must be absent. Or your group may decide to rotate leadership. This approach has some advantages if each leader is willing to put in the necessary time for preparation and prayer before the meeting.

For maximum effectiveness, group size should be limited to about ten or twelve members. With a small group like this, all members will have a chance to participate actively, if you have more than a dozen participants, consider dividing into two or more groups with a leader for each group. Groups may choose to meet in a church, a home, or some other setting. They may be made up of men only, of women only, or both together. If possible, allow ninety minutes (or more) for your discussion, sharing, and prayer time. If your situation does not allow the group to meet for that long, sessions can be shortened by the leader's selecting specific discussion questions from those provided.