



Daily Quiet Time Guide

Standalone, Week 1

Devotional Adapted From:
What Jesus Demands From the World



HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME

The QT Guide is designed to help you MOVE with God through Bible Reading, reflection and prayer. It can be completed in about 7 minutes.

½ Minute Preparing Your Heart: Invest the first 30 seconds preparing your heart. You might pray, “Lord, cleanse my heart so You can speak to me through the Scriptures. Make my mind alert, my soul active, and my heart responsive. Surround me with Your presence during this time.”

4 Minutes Listening To God: Take the next four minutes to read the Bible. Your greatest need is to hear a word from God. Allow the Word to strike fire in your heart. Meet the Author!

2.5 Minutes Talking To God: After God has spoken through His Book, then speak to Him in prayer.

DAY 1

John 3:1-8

You Must Be Born Again

Books, media reports, and sermons commonly refer to “born again Christians,” but what does that phrase mean? The Barna research group uses the label “born again” for people “who say they have made ‘a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today’ and who also indicated they believe that when they die they will go to Heaven because they had confessed their sins and had accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.”

The phrase comes to us from John’s Gospel where we find a man named Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee—an expert in the Scriptures—and a ruler of the Jews. He was also a respectable and important religious leader. (see John 3:1) Nicodemus saw Jesus perform signs in Jerusalem. He may have been present when Jesus drove the merchants and animals from the temple with a whip. (see John 2:14-15). And so he came to Jesus by night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” (John 3:2). Jesus’s teaching about new birth and the kingdom of God explodes Nicodemus’s human categories and exposes that this esteemed scholar is in the dark concerning the true ways of God. Nicodemus asks, “How can these things be?” Jesus challenges him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?” (John 3:9-10).

Nicodemus claims that he can see and understand something of who Jesus is from these miracles. However, Jesus insists, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3). The Jewish scholar doesn’t get it: “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” (John 3:4). A person may be born into a religious family, may receive biblical education, may be a law-abiding, moral person, and may even hold a religious job, and yet be spiritually dead and ignorant of the true reality of God’s saving grace. Nicodemus was. The dead can’t see.

Those born only once are born of the flesh, are spiritually dead, and do not understand and believe Jesus's teaching. Those who are "born again" by the Spirit receive Jesus's testimony about heavenly things and are alive to God to see His saving grace as true and glorious.

The person who is ignorant or unskilled needs education. The sick or injured require medical attention. The depressed or troubled may seek counseling. Sinners who are liable to God's judgment and the spiritually dead do not fundamentally need new knowledge, moral reform, or religious affiliation—they need new life. We must be born again. We need to experience the supernatural transforming work of God in our lives. That's what Jesus demands.

DAY 2

Matthew 22:34-40

Love God with All Your Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength

Our culture treats love as a basic individual right. People are free to love and express that love however they want. A couple may marry if they fall in love and divorce when they fall out of love. Those who have affairs are presented as courageous—willing to risk everything for the freedom to love.

Jesus makes clear demands about whom we must love and how we must love. Jesus demands that we love according to the absolute standards that the Creator God has established. The great and first commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind is not a call to abandon our heart's desires, but instead, to look to God as the only one who will perfectly and eternally satisfy our longing to love.

How often did you use or see the word *love* this week on social media or in conversations at work, home, or church? You might say: I love my wife and kids! I love turtle cheesecake frozen custard! I love Minnesota in the fall! I love the latest U2 album! Of course we don't put all those "loves" on the same level—we have deeper affection and commitment for our spouses and children than we have for ice cream, colorful trees, football, and music. Each of these loves requires some relationship or personal experience. An unmarried man does not express deep affection and commitment to a wife he does not have, and only someone who has personally tasted turtle cheesecake frozen custard will declare its excellencies. In the same way, the unrepentant person whose heart is spiritually dead and whose mind is set on earthly things cannot and does not "love God" with his heart and mind. We need to be personally transformed if we are to love God and His Son, Jesus, as the Bible demands.

Jesus becomes the litmus test for whether or not someone genuinely knows and loves the Father. The Bible does not present us with the option of loving God but rejecting Jesus. Jesus says in John 8:42, "If God were your Father, you would love me." Loving God is more than vague attraction or generic gratitude. It is recognizing and relishing the compelling beauty of Jesus. We cannot love Jesus in our fallen human nature. We need God to give us a new heart, new preferences, and new desires to see and treasure Jesus as beautiful and not boring.

Jesus demands that we love Him more than family and friends, more than sex and sports, more than frozen custard and the beach house. Jesus doesn't demand our love like an insecure, manipulative brat but as the Good Shepherd who has laid down His life for us and as the glorious, risen King with all authority. He commands that we love Him for our supreme good and our supreme joy because He alone is able to satisfy the longings of our hearts for goodness, truth, and beauty. When Christ is our

first love, we are able to love and enjoy other people and other things as wonderful gifts from God's hand.

DAY 3

Matthew 5:43-48, Romans 5:10

Love Your Enemies

"Enemies" are people who are against you, those who dislike you, oppose you, or want you to fail. American readers may think immediately of the Soviet Union during the Cold War or violent extremist groups such as the Taliban or Islamic State in recent years. Some may think of individuals who have caused immense pain or disappointment through betrayal, gossip, slander, injustice, or rivalry. The "enemies" for Jesus's first hearers may have included the Romans who ruled over the Jews or the despised Samaritans.

The natural response to enemies is to "hate" them, whether through active hostility or passive avoidance. However, Jesus commands us to love our enemies, pray for our persecutors, and forgive those who do us wrong. And He profoundly illustrates such love by washing the feet of those who would betray, deny, and abandon Him. He also asked God to forgive those who crucified Him and offered His own life as a ransom. According to the apostle Paul, Jesus died to reconcile us to God while we were His "enemies." (see Rom. 5:10).

It's impossible to obey Jesus's commands, to give to those who ask, to accept dishonor and inconvenience, and to lend without expecting repayment if we love money and find our security and satisfaction on earth. Jesus declares that we cannot serve God and money, and He summons us to find our true security, identity, and honor in knowing and being known by our Heavenly Father.

Consider Jesus's logic in Matthew 5:44-45: "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." Jesus does not mean that love for enemies makes you a child of God. No one can earn the right to be God's child. You must be born of God. Rather, He means that you show that you are God's child when you love your enemies and do what you see your Father doing.

When we love our enemies, we show that we are God's adopted children. We give mercy to the undeserving because we have received undeserved mercy from God. We can endure insults, injustices, or injuries because we have a Heavenly Father who takes care of us and has promised a reward far better than human praise and acceptance. The joy that sustains us in the midst of persecution, as we endeavor to love our enemies, is not based mainly on what this world can offer, but on what God will be for us as a Father and what Jesus will be for us as our King in the age to come.

DAY 4

Matthew 6:19-24, Luke 11:35

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

Think about your toys as a child. You probably spent hours playing with those toy cars, dolls, stuffed animals, or video games that are now either stored in a box in the attic or discarded in a landfill. Think about your family's first computer. As useful and enjoyable as it was, the technology has now become obsolete, forcing you to replace it with a newer model that doesn't require floppy disks or DOS commands. Today's top smartphone will be cast off in three years. Your new car will rust and eventually break down. The birthday present your children ask for will likely be neglected or forgotten a year from now. Such is the life cycle of all our possessions.

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth" doesn't mean that Christians shouldn't give gifts, use computers, drive cars, buy homes, or save for retirement. But His teaching raises the important question: Where is our treasure? How we spend our paychecks says a lot about what we enjoy most. Jesus teaches a great deal about money because He knows that the way we use it signals where our heart is—that is, what we worship.

Christians and non-Christians go to the same grocery stores, shopping malls, and websites to buy what they need and want. They deposit their earnings at the same banks. Yet, Jesus demands that His followers lay up treasures in heaven. We do this by using our money and possessions strategically and sacrificially to serve others in love and to advance God's kingdom priorities.

Jesus demands that we lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth, and in verse 24, He makes clear that we cannot serve both God and money.

An expert jeweler can quickly discern the difference between the exquisite diamond and the imitation cubic zirconia. Similarly, the eye that is "healthy" or "good" discerns what is beautiful and what is ugly, what is precious and what is worthless. The good eye is not fooled by money's counterfeit appeal and rightly views God as supremely more valuable than money.

The good eye sees God more beautiful and desirable than money, which motivates us to store up treasures in heaven and not on earth. We must pray for such a clear vision for God as our singular treasure. We must also fight to keep a good eye and not grow careless, as Jesus says: "Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness." (Luke 11:35). Do not settle for any other competing treasure. See and savor the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

DAY 5

Matthew 28:18-20

Make Disciples of All Nations

The term *missions* is common in Christian circles. Typically, missions refers to the sending of Christian workers for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship among the nations.

What motivates this work of missions? Many secular critics argue that missions work is intolerant, misguided, and negatively influences indigenous peoples by introducing foreign beliefs and cultures. However, the true motivation and aim of Christian missions is worship. Matthew 28:17 states, "When they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted." You see, Jesus demands worshipers to go and make disciples of all nations, disciples who will see and worship Jesus as the risen, reigning Lord.

The Great Commission has been the theme of countless sermons and conference messages and has inspired numerous people to leave their homes, jobs, and loved ones to make Christ known among the nations. These verses include clear direction and motivation for the missionary task, not only for the apostles but also for each generation of Christ-followers after them. Jesus's authority in heaven and on earth was not limited to the apostolic period, and neither was His promise to "be with you always, to the end of the age." It follows that Jesus's demand to "make disciples of all nations" continues to be crucially relevant for Jesus's followers until He returns at the end of this age.

It is significant that Jesus lays claim on the nations indirectly through His followers, who are His witnesses in the world. Jesus did not write any books. Rather, Jesus taught His disciples about the kingdom of God and gave them instructions for forty days, He promised to send the Holy Spirit, and then He ascended into heaven to sit at His Father's right hand. Jesus commissions and empowers His followers to go make disciples of all nations. Muslims and materialists, Hindus and hedonists, everyone must hear that Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth, that He offers forgiveness of sins, and that He calls us to follow Him and obey all His commands.

Jesus sends His disciples to be His ambassadors among all nations, to boldly testify to the truth and to personally represent Him. He says in Luke 10:16, "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me." This means that many will reject the claim that all authority belongs to Jesus, and consequently they will reject, scorn, and hate Jesus's emissaries. Opposition should not surprise or deter us because Jesus is the Lord of heaven and earth and He has promised to be with us forever to ensure that His Great Commission is fulfilled.