SERMON TRANSCRIPT

How To: Spend time with God

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How To: Growing in your faith | November 17, 2026 | Mark 1:35-39; John 3:16-18; Romans 5:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Psalms 16:11; Psalms 90:14; Psalms 94:18-19

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Hey, guys. Thanks so much for listening to today's teaching from The Grove at Champion Forest. We pray this message helps you grow in your love for God and His Word.

Grab your Bibles and your notebooks. We are finishing up our How To series tonight. I pray it's blessed you as we've talked about leading, repentance, sharing the gospel, and what it means to build and cultivate community.

Tonight, we're going to talk about how to spend time with God. What does that look like? How do we grow in it? What are the different ways, and what does that mean for us tonight?

Last week, I was out of town. My wife and I were in New York, and we're having baby number two. He is due in May, and we're super excited about that. God is good.

As much as we love our daughter, we loved the idea of having a week alone, so we went to New York, and Lily had an awesome time with family. One of the things we did that was on my wife's bucket list was go to a Broadway play.

Now, if you look at me, you probably don't think, "Broadway guy," and you're absolutely right. I'd been to one before this, and it was horrible. So I was like, "All right, I'm going to go, and I'm going to be a good husband. I'm going to humble myself. She's going to like it." I really enjoyed it. We went and saw The Outsiders.

But here's the deal, Outsiders fans, okay? My wife and I couldn't just walk up and be like, "We'd really like to see a show."

They'd be like, "Okay."

"Is there any opportunity?"

"Yeah, but you've got to pay for it."

"Well, can we just get in?"

No, that wouldn't work. For us to enjoy the show, there had to be access. We had to buy a ticket, and then having the ticket wasn't enough. You've got to show up with the ticket.

Access to God Through Jesus

As we talk about spending time alone with God, here's where I want to start: access. You and I must have access to spend time with God.

I've been thinking about it, and anything you like and I like requires access. It's transactional. I love the sunrise. To access it, I've got to get up to see it. I love eating food. To access it, I've got to go to a restaurant, pay for it, wait on it, and then eat it. Paychecks are enjoyable. To access those, you've got to work. They don't just come to you. In my marriage, to go deeper with my wife, know her more, and enjoy our time requires time and access together.

We grow in enjoyment through access. There's nothing we have that's enjoyable without access. You must have it. You can have fond ideas. You can have opinions. You can even presume to like something or dislike something without ever experiencing it because you've never had access. We jump to the opinion.

Because access is demanded, I can't go further in spending time with God and what that looks like - and we're going to get really, really, really practical tonight - without first telling you that it is impossible for you to spend time with God without a relationship with Jesus. It cannot happen. You can't will it enough. You can't try hard enough. You can't hope for it enough. Time with God comes through access, which is only in Jesus.

That's why each and every one of you overlaid your testimony with Jesus, what He's done for you, David, the blood of Jesus. This idea of spending time with God and being in relationship with Him can't happen until you belong to Him. You can't belong to God until you have Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Sin completely separates you from God. No access was granted until Jesus came. That is the beautiful part. So we start here with the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ gives you access to spend time with God. We can't approach the idea of spending time with God without first thinking about the gospel and what He's done to allow us the opportunity to draw near.

As a soul encourager and a lifelong reminder, let's go back and think through what the gospel means, because it sets the tone for everything tonight.

> *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*
>
> *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*
>
> *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already.*
>
> — John 3:16-18

It's all centered on faith. Why? Because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

That's the gospel. You and I were dead, with no hope, but God gave. That means He chose to. Access came because God initiated it. He gave His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him would have life and life abundantly.

Time alone with God begins through access, which is a two-way movement. You cannot have access to God until you first experience the Holy Spirit's grace and awareness of sin to convict you that you do not stand in right position with God in your sin. But Christ Jesus filled the gap for you. That's where access and relationship begin. You respond to that.

You order food. You initiate, and they bring it to you. Guys or girls, you shoot your shot, and maybe they respond. It doesn't just happen. It's transactional. It's a two-way movement.

March 18, 2021, Mary Kilgo shot her shot with me. She scored. Just a fun fact for you there, okay? Good things happen.

Listen, access through Christ Jesus brings you into the eternal family of God. Access through Christ Jesus brings you into the intimate presence of holy God. Every single day, it begins with access.

Look at how 2 Corinthians puts it here:

> *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*
>
> *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;*
>
> *that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*
>
> *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*
>
> *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
>
> — 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Therefore, in light of this reality, if anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation. You are no longer who you used to be. You are no longer confined, bound, or defined by your sin nature and who you were. You are a new creation. The old passed away. It's not even relevant anymore to who you are. The new has come.

All of this is from God. He initiated it. Through Christ, He reconciled us to Himself and then gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God reconciled the world to Himself. This is personal. He did not count their trespasses against them. That's forgiveness. Then He entrusted us with the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors, representatives for Christ. God makes His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God.

For our sake - look at the access - He made Him, Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. This is the great exchange. You were dead in your sin. Christ was holy and blameless. God sent Jesus Christ to die for sin so that we could become righteous, in right standing with God, and have peace with God. That is the good news of the gospel.

One more look at it:

> *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
>
> *Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*
>
> — Romans 5:1-2

Therefore, since we have been - past tense, perfect completion - justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him, we've obtained - look at that word - access by faith into the grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

That's the groundwork for how we spend time with God. You can't do it unless you're in a relationship with God.

God wants a relationship with you. God loves you deeply and wants that relationship with you. He initiated your access by paying for your sin. You cannot be too far gone, and it's not too late right now.

There's a day coming when it will be too late, or someone in your life will be too late when they stand in front of Almighty God. But in this window of mercy, we have access to God through Jesus Christ. That's great news. That is the good news.

Christian, you have the best news the world needs to hear right now, available with you. We have the only hope. We have the only remedy to death. We have the only satisfaction of the human soul, and it's Christ Jesus. We are called to relay the message. God has one message for the world, and it's Christ.

That's how we can even approach this topic of spending time with God. It's the gospel.

Why We Spend Time With God

Now let me ask you a question: Why do I need to spend time with God? Why does everyone talk about a quiet time every single day? Why is it important for me to spend time alone with God? Why read? Why pray? Why journal? Why do I need to do these things?

In short, and primarily, it's to glorify God. God is glorified when you spend time with Him. God has laid out the Christian life to be dependent on Him. Therefore, He's glorified by our spending time with Him.

I don't have all the time to unpack this, but I believe this reality is too rich to move past. When you use a pencil or a pen and it writes what you want it to write, it's glorifying you.

When you order food, they cook it well, bring it out, you eat it, your taste buds dance, and Ratatouille happens, you tell the waiter, who didn't even cook it, "This is delicious."

They're like, "Thank you."

They didn't do anything about it. They go tell the chef. You're glorifying the chef by giving credit where credit is due.

When the sun comes up in the morning and shines, it's glorifying God because He made the sun to shine. When you draw near to God to spend time with Him, you glorify Him because that's what He made you to do.

That's the richness of Christ: He's glorified and pleased with you by having time with you. That's incredible for us to realize and think about.

When you experience this love of God and begin telling people about it, you're glorifying God. When you sell things to go on mission or fund a mission, you're glorifying God. Just as much, when you get alone and spend time with God, you glorify Him.

Why do I need to spend time with God? It is to bring Him glory.

I'll put it this way: the intended purpose of your life is to glorify God and enjoy Him. God wants you to enjoy Him. You're not just someone who does work for God. Yes, there is much work to do, but God also wants you to enjoy Him.

Some of you are missing out on much of the Christian life because you're not enjoying God. Maybe you don't think He wants that for you. Yes, He does. God longs for you to enjoy Him.

If, in our marriage, we didn't enjoy each other and we were just married, it would be only a contract. We would miss out on the whole purpose of it. Some of us Christians are missing out on what Jesus paid for because we don't think we can enjoy God to the fullest. We don't seek to enjoy God. But the whole purpose of your life is to glorify Him and enjoy Him.

Here's what Solomon, the wisest man to live, said:

> *The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*
>
> *For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.*
>
> — Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

What does God want you to do with your life? Fall deeply in love with Him every day and walk with His Word. Keep it. Obey it.

He finishes with this: God will bring every deed into judgment, every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Your life is intended to glorify God and enjoy Him. So here's the question of application for us: When I stand before God, will He be glorified by the way I lived? When I present myself to Him and my whole life is studied and under review by the Judge, will He be glorified by the way I spent my breaths? Will He be glorified by my finances? Will He be glorified through my marriage, parenting, ministry, friendships, and everything? Fill in the blank.

Will He be glorified by the way I lived my life? Will He be glorified by the way I enjoyed Him? Are you ordering your days in a way that adds to that moment when you stand before God and your life has brought Him glory?

There'll be no greater reward than to experience God and hear Him say, "Your life mattered for Me. It glorified Me. You spent time with Me. You pursued what's most important."

Now, here's something that blows my mind. Our whole life is intended to glorify God and enjoy Him. The way

God laid that out is for us to be with Him.

Think about the intentionality of the relationship God desires for us. What does He want most from you? You.

I put the things I could do for Him ahead of that. I put the needs around me ahead of that. I put the output of ministry ahead of that. That's not God's primary concern for me. God's greatest and primary focus is, guess what? Me. It's you. It's your heart.

His relationship with you is the most important thing to Him because it brings Him glory. That's exactly what Christ paid for.

So how can I bring God glory? Spend time with Him. That is the purpose of our life. For the pencil to glorify the author, it has to write. For food to glorify the chef, it has to be eaten. For the sun to glorify God, it has to shine. For you to glorify God, you spend time with Him.

Don't put the do ahead of the be. He said, "Unless you abide in Me, nothing's going to happen. Nothing lasting."

You can go do a whole lot of stuff, but it won't matter. The stuff He says, "I want to do in your life," only comes through relationship with Him, through being with Him. It is lovely to know that this is the yoke God calls us into.

What Time With God Produces

Here are a handful of examples of why, practically, we spend time with God every day. The baseline is to glorify God and enjoy Him. That's everything. But here are reasons from the Scriptures that we spend time alone with God every day.

First, spending time with God keeps me focused on the purpose and mission of my life.

How many of you know it's really easy to forget what you're doing and why you're doing it? How many of you know it's really easy to get distracted? Shiny things.

Time with God will keep you tethered to God's purpose for your life.

"What does God want me to do?"

Well, how much time are you spending with Him? That feels like a paradox.

"But there's a lot to do."

Okay, be with Him first, and He'll keep you focused on the mission and purpose of your life. He'll tell you what you shouldn't be doing, where there's wasted energy, and where there are missed assignments. Time with God will show you what you should be doing.

Here's the context before I show you this Scripture: Jesus has a public day of ministry that breaks every record. He's raising the dead, healing the sick, getting people up and walking who've never done that, and casting out demons left and right. It happens on a Sabbath. They bring the whole city to Him, and He heals

and delivers all night long. It's amazing.

If anyone had PTO in the morning, it would have been Jesus. But that's not what He does.

> *And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.*
>
> — Mark 1:35

He spent time with the Father.

That morning, people would have been waking up, and all they would have talked about was Jesus. In fact, right there in Capernaum, He could have built the first megachurch. He had all the people and all the testimonies. It would have been resourced. He could have said, "I'm going to stay in Capernaum. You bring anyone who's sick or oppressed, and I'll heal them."

He could have planted roots right there. Watch this: He could have done good things. It would have made total sense. Revival was breaking out.

But He gets alone with God. He spends time in prayer, and watch what follows:

> *And Simon and those who were with him searched for him,*
>
> *and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you."*
>
> *And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."*
>
> *And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.*
>
> — Mark 1:36-39

Simon Peter and those who were with him, the disciples, were searching for Jesus, rightly so. They found Him and said, "Everyone's looking for You."

He said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out."

Time alone with the Father reminded Jesus of His mission and purpose. So what followed that? They went throughout Galilee. They left where they were and went to Galilee, which is where most of His ministry happened. He preached and cast out demons.

Do you want to live in the purpose and mission God has for your life? It comes by spending time with God. He will keep you centered on that focus. God knows we're prone to wander. Time with God will be an anchor for the purpose of your life.

Secondly, spending time with God holds me steady and brings delight to my soul.

Doesn't that sound wonderful? To be rooted, stable, and steady, and to have inward delight that no man and nothing can ever take away. That's our aim, isn't it? That's what the soul longs for.

It's not found in getting out ahead of God or moving on from Him. No, it's coming back to Him, spending time

with Him, and going deeper with Him.

Look at what the Scriptures say:

> *When I thought, "My foot slips," your steadfast love, O LORD, held me up.*
>
> *When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul.*
>
> — Psalm 94:18-19

Translation: "Uh-oh, I'm about to wipe out in life. Everything is hitting the fan."

"Your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up." You made me steady in Your love, God.

Where does God pour out His love? By the Holy Spirit into your heart. Romans 5:5. That never puts you to shame.

Where does God love to do that? In the gathering, yes. In Bible study, yes. In Sunday worship, yes. God also delights to do it in secret, spending time alone with Him.

You're worried. You're anxious. Even if all those worries and anxieties were solved, guess what? You would still be worried and anxious. Why? Because there's plenty to be worried and anxious about.

Jesus said, "Don't worry about tomorrow's trouble. It's going to be there. It'll be enough for you today."

Be here. God will never forsake you today. You start thinking about next week, next year, the five-year plan, or the ten-year plan. You don't know the future. James says, "Don't boast in the future. Start saying, 'If the Lord wills.'"

Be here. "Your steadfast love, O Lord, held me up."

It goes on to say, "When the cares of my heart are many, Your consolations cheer my soul." Another translation says, "When anxiety overwhelms my heart, Your love brings me delight."

What a God. Go study other religions. That's not in their book. It's, "Work your way to him. Maybe he could be asleep. He may not listen. You've got to cross your fingers and hope that, when you stand before this other god, he's pleased with you. You don't know for certain."

My Bible tells me we can know for certain that God's pleased with us and that we can come to Him in anxiety and His love cheers our souls.

Spend time with God. It'll make you steady, and it'll bring delight to your soul. It's His promise, and He's good on His Word.

What's another reason we spend time alone with God? Spending time with God guides me, leads my life, gives me joy, and satisfies the deepest needs of my soul.

It only happens in time alone with God. Why? Because He made you. He knows how you work. He knows that He is the answer to everything in your life. Everything you need is Christ.

I've had so many needs in my life met, and I still wanted more. New needs came up. But when I'm content in Christ, I need nothing.

Psalm 23:1 says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Another way to say that is, "I have no wants when God's my portion."

He will lead your life. He will bring joy, and He will satisfy the deepest needs of your soul.

Look at these Scriptures:

> *You make known to me the path of life;*
>
> *in your presence there is fullness of joy;*
>
> *at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*
>
> — Psalm 16:11

Time alone with God will lead you to life, joy, and everlasting pleasure. How many of you want that? It's accessible to you right now, every single day.

This is not emotional. This is a promise. Christians don't live on emotions, feelings, and experiences. We live on promises. This is a declaration that, in the presence of God, He always leads you to life. He will give you joy, and He will satisfy your soul.

> *Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,*
>
> *that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*
>
> — Psalm 90:14

That word satisfy isn't just, "Give me enough." No, the word picture in the Hebrew is to overflow.

"Overflow me with Your steadfast love so that I may rejoice and be glad all of my days."

How does God do that? By spending time alone with Him. There are no shortcuts. There's no other way.

Here's another reason we spend time with God: It reminds me of the eternal hope, the inheritance, and the power available to me by faith.

Time alone with God takes me back to the hope He's called me to in Christ. It reminds me of my identity. More often than not, what God wants to talk to me about is my heart and my sonship. He wants to remind me what Christ has done for me. He wants to remind me what's coming. He wants to remind me of the power available in my life.

Paul prays my favorite prayer in the Scriptures in Ephesians 1. He says, "I remember you in my prayers." What was Paul doing? He was spending time with God.

If you want what we're about to look at, how do you get it? It comes through time alone with God.

> *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,*
>
> *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,*
>
> *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you,*
>
> *what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*
>
> *and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might*
>
> *that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,*
>
> *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named,*
>
> *not only in this age but also in the one to come.*
>
> — Ephesians 1:16-21

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you access. That's transactional divine initiative. He may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened so that you would know the hope to which He has called you. You would know the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints.

Listen, Christian, you're a saint. That means you're holy and set apart by God. That's not just a cool idea. That's divine reality. God has done such a work in your life that He took an unholy, dead sinner and made you a holy saint. You belong to Him. You're eternally secure in Christ. He calls you a saint.

Now here's the truth of the gospel: You are His glorious inheritance. That means God is eagerly awaiting to fully get you, to transform your body into the eternal, for you to see Him eye to eye, and for you to experience heaven. God is waiting with excitement for you.

You think about heaven and what's coming: no more pain, no more death, no more sickness, no more sighing or sorrow, no more wanting, no more insecurity, and no more anxiety. That's what we get to inherit. Isn't that exciting?

But this calls us God's glorious inheritance. You matter to God. You matter deeply to the Lord.

God wants to remind you every day of the hope He's called you to in Christ. He wants to remind you every single day that you belong to Him and He can't wait to fully have you.

Thirdly, God wants to remind you every day that there is an immeasurable greatness of power toward us who believe.

I'm not an English major, and I never will be, but immeasurable sounds like a word you can't quantify, right? It makes no sense to then measure it. How? It's immeasurable.

Here's the measurement we have of the immeasurable greatness of God's power available to us through faith.

Paul says, "This kind of power that I'm talking about is according to the working of God's great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but in the age to come."

The kind of power God has available to you is resurrection power. There is nothing - nothing - that could have kept Jesus dead. Nothing. Death itself couldn't hold Him. He loosened the pangs of it.

That means that whatever you're going through, there is an immeasurable greatness of power available to you. How? Through faith. By believing God. By spending time daily with God. By going and getting alone with God even when you don't feel like He's there, even when you don't feel like it's working, even when you don't feel like your prayers are ever going to be answered, and even when nothing changes.

By faith, you crawl your way to that room. You close the door, and you plead with God to move. You seek Him, and you say, "God, I've got these needs in my life, but above those needs, I want You. I know that if I have You, I need nothing."

By faith, you go back every single day to that place, that time, that plan, and back to Him. It's personal. We're going to look at that in a second.

Why do you do it? Because you need to remember there is an immeasurable greatness of power available to each and every one of you for what God's called you to do.

I'm looking at Kelly. She's praying through moving out of this country to go live on mission. That's going to take a whole lot of power. Guess what? She's got resurrection power in Christ to do His will.

You go get alone with God. He reminds you of your purpose and mission. You say, "God, I don't think I can do that."

Well, hold on. Wait a minute. I've got immeasurably great power available to me by faith. Yes, God, You can do this through my life.

God's not going to call you to anything easy. You can't tell your heart to beat. What do you possibly think would be easy for you?

So He gives us the power. How do we draw from that power? How do I charge my phone? I plug it in. How do I fill up my truck? I go to a gas station. How do I fill my stomach when I'm hungry? I go eat.

Do you need power? Go to God.

Spending time with God is where my true life comes into focus.

What does that mean, "my true life"? The Scriptures teach that only what's done in Christ is true and lasting. There's a lot of falsehood in this world. There's a lot of deceit in this world.

The ultimate reality for you, if you're a Christian in the room and Jesus is the Lord and Savior of your life, is that you're a son or a daughter. Nothing else. That's it. No more titles. No more labels. You're a son. You're a

daughter. That's true life in Christ.

When I spend time alone with God, He reminds me of what's true in my life, and it comes into focus. It's like contacts or glasses for your soul, where you finally begin seeing clearly.

> *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*
>
> *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*
>
> *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*
>
> *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*
>
> — Colossians 3:1-4

If you have been - past tense, perfect completion - raised with Christ, what should you do? Seek the things that are above. How do you do that? You spend time with God.

Seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds, your thought life, on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth. For you've died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you'll also appear with Him in glory.

This teaches that your truest self is in Christ. So if you want to grow in your true self, where do you go? To Christ.

How do we spend time with Him? We pray, read, confess our sin, walk in truth, and live in community. But it's spending time alone with God every day that grows us in that.

If your true life is in Christ, you shouldn't look for anything outside of Christ. If it's not true, then it's false. Why follow anything false? Why give yourself to anything false?

One of my favorite passages of Scripture is Isaiah 55. It says, "You who are thirsty and hungry and have no money, come eat, buy, and drink."

How can you pay for something with no money? It tells me it's provided for.

Then it says, "Why do you spend your money on that which does not satisfy? Why do you eat that which is not bread? Why do you toil anxiously?"

Christian, you'll feel drained and depleted if you're giving your life to falsehood. Only in Christ is there what is true. Does that make sense?

Your truest self is in Christ. Do you want to have that life, life abundant? Find it in Christ Jesus.

Here's what Paul says:

> *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*
>
> *And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God,*

> *who loved me and gave himself for me.*
>
> — Galatians 2:20

"I have been" - past tense - "crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

That means you're not the boss of yourself anymore. If you've asked for the forgiveness of your sins and new life in Christ Jesus, He is Savior and Lord. He is the leader of your life. He is leading you through the Holy Spirit who lives inside you.

Paul says, "The life I now live in the flesh," the life you can see with your eyes, "I live by faith in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Unhurried Time With the Lord

We're going to start closing, and we're going to get really, really, really practical about what it means to spend time with God. But I couldn't do that without first underlining that, to spend time with God, you have to have access, and that only comes through Jesus Christ.

Why do we spend time with God? Primarily, it's to glorify Him. That is the first order of spending time with God: that your life would be meaningful to Him.

How does our life matter to God? Spend time with Him.

Then we looked at a ton of practical reasons why we spend time with God day by day. What difference does it make if I spend time with God?

Now we're going to look at how we spend time with God. What is the daily application? How can you add this rhythm to your life?

I'm going to put this on the screen. This is a phrase God has taught me over the last year or year and a half, and it's changing my life. But I go back to it every single day.

That's the thing: One lesson isn't enough. It's day by day by day by day by day that you're going to grow in your relationship with God.

No one was ever an all-star on their first day on the job. You had no idea what you were doing, but you were in training. You were being walked through it and given assignments that fit where you were.

God knows exactly where you are right now, so you don't need to compare yourself to anyone else. Be where you are with God, but pursue growth in it. That growth happens day by day, just like anything else in life. You grow by doing it and giving yourself to it.

Time with God is no different. It doesn't just fall out of the sky, and poof, you're a super mature Christian all of a sudden. No, it's day-by-day growth.

Often, it feels invisible. Often, it feels like no one notices. Often, it feels like nothing's happening. But then you

look up in six months or a year.

How many of you are a completely different person than you were a year ago? Did you feel it every single day? No. But day by day, you gave yourself to time alone with God. That's the only way we're changed.

Here's the phrase: unhurried time with the Lord.

We're going to unpack it word for word. Unhurried time with the Lord.

I'm telling you, this is what I'm learning, and this has changed my relationship with God. It has changed my view of every day. It has changed my view of who He is and what it means to spend time with Him.

Unhurried

The first word we're going to unpack is unhurried.

The pace of our souls is rapid. How many of you feel like your emotions and thoughts fly around on the inside at a million miles an hour? Anyone in the room?

You can't sit still in a quiet room because everything inside you goes blaringly loud. That's how you feel. Your outward body starts tapping your foot, moving, and fidgeting. You've got to do something like that because your inward soul is loud and moving so fast.

The culture we live in today has implemented in us this fast-paced, transactional, stimulated living. We have short focus in our engagement. It has sped up the pace of our souls.

Inwardly, we're sprinting a marathon day by day by day. We have these dos and don'ts, worries, needs, wants, hopes, and dreams. Then there's this inward conflict: "Am I even good enough? Am I lovable? Will I let this person down? What if they truly knew me? Do they like me? Is everyone in the room thinking about me?"

We have all this inward action going on all the time.

Then we get alone with God, get quiet, and become so uncomfortable because, for the first time maybe that day, week, month, or even in years, you're alone with yourself, and it's unbearable.

Has anyone else ever felt that way?

As God has begun to take me through this learning process of grace, I've learned how uncomfortable with myself I am, and how anxious and insecure I am.

Now that's grace. Awareness of that is grace. God's desire is that this grace would lead me closer to Him.

The opposite of grace is condemnation. The enemy's desire, with your sense of inadequacy and anxiety, is to lead you further from God. So we respond by grace, and we draw near to God.

Here's what happens over time as we pursue this unhurried state of the soul: Time with God leads us into a quiet soul, stillness, inward peace, clarity, and focus.

No doubt this is the most challenging and demanding part of spending time alone with God and growing this discipline. It's uncomfortable how much you'll grow in awareness of where you are right now, where you struggle, what controlling interests are competing with your heart, who you're listening to, who you're following, who you compare yourself to, and what you don't like about yourself.

That's where it starts, friend. It starts there. I'm there.

Guess what? There's not a single day that I've completed in the past that has now given me a constant state of an unhurried soul. I don't walk around just humming. There's not 24/7 peace within me because I'm a pastor. My inner life isn't just shalom.

Every single day, I'm in front of God hurried. When I wake up, I'm telling you, I feel like the hamster wheel of my soul is spinning out of control. That's me.

Bless you.

That's me every single day. So please, please, please, please don't be discouraged if that's also you. That's where God does some of His best and deepest work, starting with the hurried soul and getting you into an unhurried place.

Zephaniah 3:17 has been one of my favorite Scriptures for a long time.

> *The LORD your God is in your midst,*
>
> *a mighty one who will save;*
>
> *he will rejoice over you with gladness;*
>
> *he will quiet you by his love;*
>
> *he will exult over you with loud singing.*
>
> — Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord, Yahweh, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is in your midst. He's a mighty one who will save.

Look at how God initiates all of this. He will rejoice over you with gladness. Christian, God rejoices over you with gladness. He will quiet you by His love. Christian, God quiets the soul with His love. Christian, God exults over you with loud singing.

Only God can unhurry your soul.

There's a book by a pastor and author named John Ortberg called Soul Keeping. He uses this brilliant illustration to talk about what this means for us each day.

He talks about life in a village. It's a small village in the mountains, and they have this little lake where all of their life comes from. They go there and wash their clothes. They get their drinking water. They clean their food. Life happens at this water hole. Community happens there. They're dependent on that water.

But what you don't see is that if you walk around the lake and start going up the mountain, there's a really

narrow spot, about a hand's width, where there's a little brook and water is running. It starts at that brook, where the water runs down and gradually grows. Then it collects at the bottom with fresh water that keeps the people alive.

If sticks, rocks, mud, and debris block up that tiny little brook, the water stops moving at the bottom. You can't drink it, or it would kill you. It doesn't clean anything because it's dirty.

That's the state of our souls. More often than not, it's these little sticks, rocks, mud, and debris that clog up our fellowship with God. When we clear out these unassuming things that we don't look at, and when God highlights them and we begin clearing them out, life flows from there.

We have this desire to arrive at the destination, but God takes you on this journey exactly where you need to go.

Before I was called to ministry, I was working in the physical therapy world. I would always tell people that pain doesn't mean that's where the problem is. Pain is the closest area where the muscle connects to the brain and highlights that something isn't working right.

But more often than not, something beneath it has given out, so there's a compensation that adds more strain to muscles, tissues, and joints that aren't supposed to do that job.

Christian, anxiety, worry, and stress don't always mean that the thing you're worried about is what's causing it. There's a deeper underlying issue that only the Holy Spirit can trace.

He'll take you there, and then He'll show you this, and you'll go, "What?"

Then He'll take you there, lead you here, and take you on these pit stops that are critical for your long-term health. It's when we're unhurried before the Lord that this takes place.

> *Be still, and know that I am God.*
>
> *I will be exalted among the nations,*
>
> *I will be exalted in the earth!*
>
> — Psalm 46:10

Let me tell you what this stillness doesn't mean. It doesn't mean doing this. That's foolish.

He's telling His people, "Hey, quiet your soul. Cease to worry, and just know that I'm God. I've got everything under control."

Remember the children's song, "He's got the whole world in His hands. He's got me and you, sister, in His hands. He's got me and you, brother, in His hands."

You're good in Him. Be still. Quiet your soul.

How do I do that? I get alone with God. It's about being unhurried.

To spend time with God, we have to let His love quiet our souls. What a beautiful promise that He chooses love to be the remedy for the anxious soul.

How do we do that? We start in silence and solitude.

Before you open up the Bible, start reading, and start journaling, just sit alone with God in silence. Let Him filter through your thoughts. Get so uncomfortable.

I don't know if I've told you all this before, but it's been true for me. This is not legalistic or ritualistic, where I have the countdown and then go, "Boom, God's here." No, God is always with us.

But I'm telling you, in my experience, it takes a good 15, sometimes 30-plus minutes of silence and solitude before my soul begins quieting down. There's so much going on inwardly, and God's not in a rush. God wants to walk through all of it with you.

There was a season in my life about a year and a half or two years ago when I was praying for God to get me out of uncomfortable situations. I sensed the Holy Spirit impress on my heart, "I want to shepherd you in it. I'm not moving you out of it because I want to walk with you in it. That loneliness, anxiety, and depression - I want to shepherd you in that. If you'll let Me teach you My character in that, then you'll learn Me more."

Maybe one of the answers is, "Okay, Lord, shepherd me in my discomfort and distress."

Silence and solitude have become some of the greatest disciplines of my life. Get unhurried with God. That takes time, and it's so worth it.

Time

Number two is time. What does it mean to spend time with God?

In Greek, there are two words for time. There's chronos, which is quantitative, linear, sequential, measured time: seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, and years.

Then there's kairos, which is qualitative, critical, opportune, meaningful time.

God wants us to have both of these with Him. It takes the chronos to get the kairos. If you don't spend the minutes with God, you don't get the moments with God.

Every day, you need to set aside measurable time to spend with God.

If I don't take my wife on dates, we don't grow. If we don't talk and spend time together, we don't grow. It doesn't just happen. It takes set-apart, intentional time for those meaningful moments to happen.

More often than not, life is about those 10,000 tiny moments rather than the few big ones. God wants to have that measured time with you so He can have meaningful time with you.

Here it is in a point: If you don't spend the minutes with God, you won't experience the moments with God.

God wants to experience moments with you, and that happens through the rhythm of spending time alone with

God.

Here's the question for you: Am I preoccupied with good things, or am I choosing what is best? Am I giving myself away to a lot of good things but neglecting the best?

When my wife was pregnant and we had Lily Grace, our daughter, those first six weeks were just survival. It was so difficult. You don't sleep. Everyone forgets that it's hard, and they're like, "Oh, you're so cute."

You're like, "Yeah, but I'm dying here."

My wife and I were in very real survival mode. That meant we were so focused on Lily, keeping her alive and keeping us alive, which isn't bad, that we missed each other.

We missed that, in God's designed order, marriage comes first. More than parenting, more than being a dad and mom, being a husband and wife is of first importance.

Sometimes we get preoccupied with good things and miss the best thing.

How can you know that in your life? It's through spending time alone with God, where He tells you and shows you where you are.

This is what David says:

> *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

David is saying, "There's one thing I need. I'm asking God for it, but I'm also seeking after it."

That requires time, and God blesses and honors that.

To experience God, you must set time with God. You give time to everything else. You've got to give time to God, and He is the best use of your time.

How do we do that? You have a place, a time, and a plan that you protect and guard so that you're available to experience meaningful time with God.

I wake up early in the morning with a cup of coffee. I go to my chair, sit there, and practice silence and solitude. I'm not great at it. I'm not perfect by any means, but I'm trying to grow in it.

I have a reading plan. I'm going through a Bible right now, and it's a journal Bible with columns. I'm doing it for

my daughter. I'll read something that day and write a prayer for her that I'll give her one day. I'm taking notes because I want her to read her daddy's handwriting in the Bible and know that he sought the Lord for her.

I had someone tell me they did that, and I thought, "Oh, yeah, I'm doing that."

I spend time alone with God every day. My template, my idea, is that I read a chapter of the Old Testament, or a couple. If it's a story and it just breaks, I don't want to stop. I want to read through the story.

I'll read the proverb of the day according to the day of the month. I'll read a psalm, sometimes two or three, depending on how long it is or wherever God is speaking to me. I want to set up camp and stay put. Then I'll read a chapter of the New Testament.

That's my idea for every day. Do I do it every day? No. Do I meet with God every day? Yes.

Are there some days when my silence and solitude go for 45 minutes? Yes, and it's rich. That peace - I can't even explain it. That's what it says: beyond comprehension.

Then there are some days when, in my reading, I just can't stop going through the story. Or I only read the Old Testament because God is so clearly speaking to me and showing me things.

I've had to learn over time that time with God doesn't get better if you just turn the pages, but if you go deeper.

Here's what I've learned: Sometimes you need to read less Bible so you get more Bible.

I need to set up camp in my Old Testament so I can go deep into it, versus saying, "Oh, that was really good," flipping the page, and starting here. It's like God's still speaking, and then you just keep moving on.

Some of you are reading much Bible but very little Bible. Some of you are reading very little Bible and getting very little Bible. Some of you read no Bible.

You're not going to grow in a relationship with God if you don't pursue Him. You have a part to play in it. He's given you access. Take it.

But some of you need to stop trying to be perfect in your plan and be with Him.

With the Lord

That's where I want to finish our time tonight: unhurried time with the Lord.

Time alone with God isn't a chore. It's a privilege to be with Him personally.

> *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*
> — James 4:8

It's a personal relationship with God. It's not an empty room with a ceiling and a distant God who may hear you. No, it's the personal relationship you get to have with God each and every day.

It's not a plan you're going deeper with. I think it's Tozer, in the book called Knowing God, who says that the

end of every good Bible study is Him.

Scripture is our path to walk with God and know Him more. But you could know the Book and not have a deeper relationship with Him. It's about spending time with the Lord.

We look at it every night, and we're about to look at it again: With confidence, draw near to the throne of grace, where He is seated, to receive mercy, grace, and help in our time of need.

Pastor Jarrett took us through a series on prayer, and he said, "Prayer is sharing life with God."

Time alone with God is doing and sharing life with Him, personally with Him.

Here's how I want to finish with you tonight, with this prayer Paul prayed:

> *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*
> — 2 Corinthians 13:14

Fellowship in the Greek is koinonia. It's an intimate, shared partnership.

The Holy Spirit lives in you, so where is the best place to spend time with Him? With you. He is in you. He's leading your time alone with God.

When you open the Scripture and the Spirit of God is in you, nothing is a coincidence. He is speaking to you. Write it down. Pray it. Underline it. Share it. Grow in it. Seek it.

Day by day by day, I promise you'll look up and know God more than you did a year ago today. Then, in five years, you'll know Him more than you did in three years because you pursued Him every single day.

Here's the last point: To continue experiencing God, you must expect fellowship with Him.

I've heard some people practice this by putting an empty chair in the room and picturing Jesus sitting in that chair. If that works for you, that's awesome. I've tried that, and it worked for me for a season.

Just remind yourself that when you get alone with God, you're with Him. It's not just an idea. It's more than a discipline, but it's still a discipline to be with God.

What do you do? You set your heart on the Lord and on spending time with Him. It's personal.

Every relationship is personal. There's no one in this room who has a great and growing friendship or relationship that's robotic. No, it's organic. You move together. You talk together. You listen together.

You can show up with a plan for what you want to talk about, but then it can change, and it can get better. So have a plan, but be willing to give it to God if He calls you to an extended time of silence, prayer, reading, journaling, or whatever it is.

It's organic. It's alive and active because it's with the Lord.

Here's the last one for you, all on the screen: To spend unhurried time with God every day, start in silence and

solitude.

Set a clock. Start with five minutes. For five minutes, just sit alone. Then add it to 10. Then go to 15. Then go to 20. Just let God continue increasing it.

Have a time, a place, and a plan. Have a friend. Get accountable. Ask, "Will you start a Bible reading plan with me?" Then read each and every day.

Give God the time you have, but make time for Him. If He asks for more, give it. Wake up earlier. Whatever it takes, spend time alone with God.

Before you go to bed at night, ask Him to get you ready for that time alone with God in the morning. Then set your heart on the Lord and on spending time with Him.

Listen, we are lifelong learners in this pursuit of time alone with God. There's not a perfect way to do it, but there's a progressive way. He cares deeply about you, and He wants that relationship with you.

I'm going to pray, and then we're going to respond in our throne of grace time.

Lord Jesus, I fully recognize that this topic is endless. There's no end to Your goodness. There's no end to Your presence.

Thank You that we have a living fellowship with You, and so our time alone with You is a living fellowship.

I pray for the person in the room who used to have a great season of time alone with You. Would You guard their heart from trying to get back to a past faithfulness? Lead them to be faithful to You today.

God, would You give us a deep love for Your Word and for Your presence, that every single day we would pursue You, seek You, and learn to enjoy You as You desire to be enjoyed?

I pray that You would show them a Bible reading plan and give them friends to do it with. Tomorrow morning, when they wake up and have the choice, "Do I hit snooze? Do I do this other thing first? Do I grab my phone? Should I wake up earlier?" would You, by the love You have for them, lead them to say yes?

Would You teach us the grace that we are in Christ, loved by Him? We can't improve on Your finished work, but we can learn to enjoy You in greater depths.

Because You're the eternal, almighty God of love and power, for the rest of our lives, You're leading us into a deeper discovery and enjoyment of Yourself.

Then, because of Jesus and our access, we will be in eternity with You, where there will be no end, no rush, and no hurry.

Lord, would You teach us how to live in unhurried time with You?

In Jesus' name, amen.

Thanks again for listening to today's teaching from The Grove. Be sure to follow us on Instagram at

@thegrove_cf. If you're a young adult in Northwest Houston, we'd love to connect with you on Tuesday nights and Sunday mornings. We hope to see you soon.