

Robert West

The
Quiet
Time
Principle

"...In returning and rest you shall be saved; In quietness and confidence shall be your strength..." (Isaiah 30:15)

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	i
Preface	1
Introduction	3
Chapter 1 Christ-Centered Principles of Effective Time Management	9
Chapter 2 How to Find Time for God in Your Schedule	14
Chapter 3 The Secret of a Real Christian Life	20
Chapter 4 Daniel's Story	27
Chapter 5 How to Maintain a Mindset of Quietness and Rest	32
Conclusion	36
Notes	39
Bibliography	42
About the Author	44

INTRODUCTION

My Story

Results from the blood test confirmed what the doctor had suspected from his initial diagnosis: I had a serious case of chronic fatigue syndrome, a stress-related disorder. I was immediately put on full-time disability and prescribed a fierce regimen of natural and nutritional remedies to aid my recovery. Most importantly, I was ordered to get plenty of bed rest.

One afternoon during my recovery, as I lie in bed, lifeless, tired and weak, I summoned the strength to offer up a whispered prayer to God. “Lord, when I’m healed of this sickness, please help me to never go back to the lifestyle that got me into this situation.” In response to that prayer, the Lord began showing me an effective and sensible way to manage my life. It centered on spending consistent, uninterrupted, daily quiet time with Him.

This is the inspiration that led to the development of *The Quiet Time Planner™*: a time management system designed to help Christians schedule daily quiet time to meet with God.

The Assessment

The problems I faced in my health were directly related to the workaholic, performance-acceptance lifestyle I had led. I had operated under the assumption that “busyness is next to godliness.” A calendar full of work, social and religious activities correlated to my idea of being successful. I wholeheartedly participated in as many activities as my schedule would allow. In the process, I had driven myself to the point of emotional, physical and spiritual exhaustion.

It wasn’t until I called upon the Lord from my sickbed and heard His answer that I realized my error. The significance and success I sought were not found in the noise of activity,

THE QUIET TIME PRINCIPLE

but in quietness and in resting in His presence. He showed me this is why spending time alone with Him is so important.

In the early days of my recovery the Lord began showing me how to create a different type of weekly planning system. It would allow the two hemispheres of the brain to work harmoniously in the way He designed them to function. This was the foundation upon which [*The Quiet Time Planner™*](#) time management system was built.

Effective time management is a “whole brain” endeavor that involves “right brain” goal-oriented thinking and planning and “left brain” organizing and scheduling. When you quiet the “left brain” activity by insulating yourself from busyness and distractions, you are able to think more clearly, plan more effectively and get more done in less time. As a result, your “right brain,” which governs goals and priorities that flow out of your life’s purpose, destiny and mission, is able to work unhindered. (This is discussed in more detail in chapter two.)

The lifestyle that got me exhausted and ill was the result of my not knowing who I was and what I was put on Earth to become. I was stressed out because I was malfunctioning. I was a scheduler, trying to manage my life using only half of my brain.

When I got properly in tune with the Lord, He revealed His deep love for me and the price He paid to secure my salvation and freedom. I found out why I am here and began to partner with Him to develop goals that were in harmony with who He created me to become.

When I began to focus on goals that stemmed from my design and purpose, I began to come alive! As a result, I was determined only to devote my time and energy to those things that were in some way related to my purpose.

Time management took on a new dimension. Spending time alone with God was not something boring, religious or scary. It was exciting! I looked forward to our daily meetings and conversations to discover more about Him, the provisions He made for me through His Son and how to regulate my time and energy. I wanted to find out how to live a life of true significance and success, not a life of “burnout.”

The Cure

In response to my prayer for healing, the first thing the Lord led me to do was read the book of Hebrews. When I got to chapter four in the book of Hebrews, I found what I needed: rest.

“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His” (Hebrews 4:9-10).

The doctor told me to get bed rest. The Lord’s diagnosis was that I needed true rest (Greek, sabbatismos): the repose of Christianity;¹ the spiritual kind of rest² to be enjoyed uninterrupted by believers in their fellowship with Him.³ And I desperately wanted that rest.

Once again, I prayed to the Lord, affirming my desire to enter His provision of rest. He, in turn, extended to me a personal invitation:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

The rest the Lord extended to me not only resulted in physical rejuvenation, but in the refreshment, development and satisfaction of my inner man (mind, will, emotions, intellect and imagination) as well.⁴

The Assignment

Several years after beginning my healing journey the Lord opened an unexpected door of opportunity for me to share my recovery testimony. The Director of Christian Education at a 22,000-member church in Los Angeles invited me to make presentations on the subject of time management to one of the church’s discipleship schools and their auxiliary leadership development program.

Because of my background in corporate training and development, I had experience teaching time management principles in the workplace. However, I was overwhelmed by the initial invitation to discuss the topic with members of my church family. I felt this way because I realized that presenting to

THE QUIET TIME PRINCIPLE

Christian audiences would require me to impart something more substantial than the traditional business-oriented, “how-to-get-everything-done” approach to time management. I would need to share spiritual insights on the subject that were based on the word of God.

So, during my quiet time with the Lord one morning, I prayed and asked Him what He wanted me to say to His people about time management. Little did I know that what He was about to tell me was to become my assignment not only for my local church, but to others within the Body of Christ who would be helped by this information.

After praying and asking the Lord for direction, the Holy Spirit led me to read Exodus 33 verses 9, 11, and 14:

“And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. . . . And He said, ‘My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.’”

The Sarna commentary translates “rest” as “lighten your burden.”⁵

While I was meditating on these verses, the Lord revealed to me His assignment for this season of my life: “Teach My people to schedule time to meet with Me as I have scheduled time to meet with them (at the set time, at the time appointed). I will show up to meet with them if they schedule time to meet with Me.”

This is the inspiration that led me to write *The Quiet Time Principle*.

The Book

[*The Quiet Time Principle*](#) offers a Christ-centered approach to time management training, motivation and coaching. It demonstrates how laypersons and leaders can find freedom from busyness and distractions by experiencing a deeper walk with God through quiet time, Bible reading, worship and prayer.

Chapter one introduces you to the “Quiet Time Principle” and describes how organizing your priorities around this biblically based concept will enable you to experience a life of true significance and lasting success. Chapter two illustrates how learning to use both sides of the brain can help you find time for

God in your schedule. Chapters three and four outline what I call “*The Eight Keys of Effective Quiet Time Management*” and demonstrate how these strategies can help you quiet your mind so you can hear from the Lord during your time alone with Him. Chapter five identifies four practical time and life management principles that can help you maintain a mindset of quietness and rest.

CHAPTER THREE

The Secret of a Real Christian Life

“Here lies the whole secret of a real Christian life,
a life of liberty and joy and power and fullness.
To have as one’s ever-present friend, and to be conscious
that one has as his ever-present friend, the Holy Spirit
and to surrender one’s life in all its departments entirely
to his control – this is true Christian living.”¹

— R.A. Torrey

The Lord’s Prayer

As a little boy growing up in South Los Angeles in the early 1970s, I wasn’t reared in a “traditional” Christian home. My relatives were what some would call “God-fearing” people. We believed in God and had great respect for the Holy Bible. But we did not attend church.

I have no recollection of ever hearing or seeing my father praying. However, I do remember him frequently reading and studying the Bible and teaching me about God and the Bible through illustrated sermons.

I can remember one evening my dad taking me outside into our gravel-covered backyard on Florence Avenue and giving me an amateur astronomy lesson. Through the haze of the marine layer and the glare of the city lights, he pointed out stars most visible to the naked eye in the heavens: the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper and the North Star. We talked about how far the moon and the stars were from the earth and where Heaven was.

My dad told me how Jesus said, “...I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). He also told me when Jesus returns to the earth, the same sky into which we were looking will one day open to reveal Him in His glory (Revelation 19:11-16).

I remember going to bed thinking about these things and praying the only prayer I knew how to pray before falling asleep:

“Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one, For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen” (Matthew 6:9-13).

When I got to the “forever” part of the prayer, I would meditate on it by repeating “forever, and ever, and ever, and ever and ever” over, and over again. As I did, I would become so overwhelmed by the greatness and awesomeness of God that I would get scared. My eight-year-old mind could not handle thinking too much about timeless eternity, but I wanted to connect with the God my dad told me about who “lived on the other side of the stars.”

After I grew up and became a Christian, I continued to have a desire to connect with God and experience a deeper walk with Him. While I was in recovery, I had the time and opportunity to abide in His presence and establish that connection through quiet time, Bible reading, worship and prayer.

The Purpose of Prayer

In my early days of recovery, I learned something fascinating about praying to God that I never knew growing up and didn’t understand when I became a Christian. I learned that the purpose of prayer was for me to hear from God! I knew and understood intellectually that “prayer changes things,” but I had never experienced God “sharing things.”

My primary view of prayer consisted of my monologuing with God or presenting a list of needs to Him. Neither approach suggested I wait to hear what He had to say after I said, “Amen.”

Waiting on the Lord

My new paradigm for prayer, that included hearing from the Lord, was constructed from Isaiah 40:31, “But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

THE QUIET TIME PRINCIPLE

The Lord showed me that if I wanted His power to touch my life, there are things I needed to do while I “waited on Him.”

R_x for Recovery

The process He showed me was similar to the process I went through to regain my physical health. For example, before I could see my doctor, I first had to schedule an appointment. Next, I had to go to the doctor’s office and wait in the examining room for the doctor to see me.

While waiting for the doctor, I had to surrender myself to the process of removing my clothes and sitting on the examining table. In some cases, there were magazines to read or there was soft background music to hear. But in most cases, all I did while waiting was sit quietly.

When the doctor came in, he had my chart and knew my history, so I didn’t need to rehearse it. The major purpose of the appointment was for me to confess what was wrong with me, be quiet and listen to receive information from him pertaining to my assignment for improving my health.

In a similar way, there were things I needed to do while waiting on the Great Physician. They had to do with humbling myself to appear before Him, waiting for the manifestation of His peace and presence and receiving my assignment.

The Eight Keys of Effective Quiet Time Management

“*The Eight Keys of Effective Quiet Time Management*” represent what I have learned about how to wait on the Lord. These elements were compiled from a survey of Christian literature on the subject of effective Christian living and effective prayer. (See Quiet Time References in the bibliography.)

1. Welcome
2. Surrender
3. Scripture
4. Meditation
5. Worship
6. Confession
7. Quiet
8. Intercession

These principles have revolutionized my daily devotion time because they help me keep my mind focused on the Lord by quieting the “left brain” from busyness and distractions so that I can hear from the Lord during my time alone with Him.²

The Eight Keys in Action

1. **Welcome.** Welcome the presence of the Lord. Invite Him to speak into your life today.
2. **Surrender.** Surrender your mind, will, emotions, intellect, and imagination to Him.
3. **Scripture.** Listen to hear what Scripture reading objective He will speak into your spirit to pursue.
4. **Meditation.** Read the Scriptures aloud (or listen to an audio version of the Bible). Meditate on verses that touch or have an impact on you (e.g., repeat, memorize or transcribe verses; make notations in a [journal](#) or the margins of your Bible of ways the Lord is calling you to personal application of the verses).
5. **Worship.** Express gratitude to the Lord for revealing Himself and His word to you.
6. **Confession.** Confess your weakness, God's strength, your need for forgiveness, and faith in the sacrifice of Christ.
7. **Quiet.** Stop talking. Be quiet in the presence of the Lord. Listen to hear what He will speak into your spirit.
8. **Intercession.** Conclude your time together by speaking or writing a closing prayer thanking the Lord for His presence, His word, and His heart toward you. Intercede on behalf of those whom the Spirit brings to mind and accomplish what He instructs you to do.

Whether I find my rhythm by focusing on all eight points in linear order to facilitate “left brain” thinking or by concentrating on two or three points to facilitate “right brain” thinking, I have experienced life-changing results in the eight priority areas of life from using these keys as action steps for managing daily quiet time with the Lord. Here are a few examples.

Work Life

In my professional life, I purposed to not rearrange my spiritual and family life priorities and schedule to accommodate early morning breakfast meetings, or late-night networking dinners or “business opportunity” briefings. Instead, I elected to trust the Lord of Hosts (Malachi 3:10-11) to be my coach, mentor, and provider.

As a result of prioritizing worship ahead of advancement, the Lord blessed me with employment and career development opportunities where my personality, vocational skills and natural

THE QUIET TIME PRINCIPLE

abilities could flourish. He also led me to the human, financial, educational and material resources I needed in ways I know would not have been possible without His intervention.

Personal Life

In my personal life as a Christ-follower, the Lord has set me in the Body of Christ (the Church) where it pleases Him and has equipped me with the grace, fruit and gifts of the Spirit I need to serve as a “minister of reconciliation” and an “ambassador for Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). He is showing me how to represent Him by living a holy, non-religious lifestyle and teaching me how to articulate the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ when explaining the Gospel Message to friends, co-workers, neighbors, and people I have met for the first time.

As a result, I am able to serve the Lord with gladness (without becoming stressed out) and see Him perform the greatest miracle that can take place in a person’s life: the forgiveness of sins and being born again (1 John 1:8; John 3:3-8).

One such story of a person who was led to the Lord during this season of revival is my son Daniel. His story is recorded in chapter four.

NOTES

Introduction

1. James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 64.
2. Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), 115.
3. W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), 960.
4. *Ibid.*, 959.
5. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 213.

Chapter Three

1. R. A. Torrey, *The Person & Work of the Holy Spirit*. (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1996), 25.
2. While the practice of these principles is best executed in a quiet place, you should not neglect your family and/or your work responsibilities to do so. For example, if you live in a small house or apartment where it is difficult to find a quiet place, try going on prayer and praise walks. If you commute to work, transform your commute vehicle into a sanctuary by listening to the Bible or worship music on an audio device. The goal is to use the keys to quiet your mind so you can hear from God. This can be accomplished even when you are not in a quiet place.