

## The Treasure of Shared Quiet Times

I looked at the Bible with new eyes the day I entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The same words I'd muddled through, now came alive. I couldn't get enough! For hours I would sit and read as if I'd never read any of it before.

When I met Barb Choat, she challenged me, saying, "This is great Deb. But what will you do during midterm exams? Or after you get a job? Will you still take time for the Word? Or will you start to think, 'I don't have an hour today,' then end up skipping it? How much better it is to develop the discipline of taking one bite, chewing on it, and seeking to live it out every single day of your life. You can always read more later. A little dose daily will get you farther in the long run."

Thus began my adventure with shared quiet times. Right then and there Barb sat down, opened her Bible and gave me one of the best gifts I ever received!

## Transformational Quiet Times

Now there are many different ways to have a quiet time. Indeed, the words "quiet time" seem to be a catch-all for just about any activity: reading through the Bible, praying, or simply sitting quietly and listening. All of these activities are valuable, but what Barb shared with me is transforming my life more than any other spiritual discipline.

Basically there are three components. I refer to them as: Look, Listen, and Live It Out. Barb began by showing me her quiet time from the previous day so I could see this format, and then we dove in! We started together and finished together, but each completed most of it on our own with Jesus. As a result, I knew exactly what to do the next day. This also made it easy to share with another friend.

### LOOK (focus)

First we prayed, asking the Lord to open our eyes so we could see wonderful things in His word and cried out to him for wisdom (James 1:5). We asked him to show us where he wanted us to focus. Next, we started reading aloud through Psalm 1 and stopped when a verse stood out to me.

### LISTEN (meditate)

Then, we each wrote our verse at the top of a page, and separately began to record whatever thoughts came to mind. I remember writing observations, pondering the meanings of different words, and asking God questions. Was I ever surprised when I wrote down what came to mind and He took me in a direction I never expected!

### LIVE IT OUT! (apply)

Next, (still individually) we asked the Lord: What do you want me to do in response to what I've just read? How do you want this lived out? What difference will knowing this make in my life? Then, we took time to share with each other the verse we selected, our best thoughts on it, and applications. We had a brief discussion about how we could help hold each other

accountable. We concluded by praying for each other, especially asking for help to complete our applications.

Twenty-six years later, I'm still doing this with others!

### Sharing with New Believers

Whenever a new friend enters into a relationship with Jesus, a shared quiet time is usually the first thing I do with her... and not just once! The first time I show her what to do by doing it with her. In the months that follow, we meet weekly to share a quiet time together and share highlights from the rest of our times alone with God that past week. This teaches her the skill and discipline of daily quiet time, and we learn so much from each other in the process.

I began having shared quiet times with my son when he was ten years old. He grew up seeing his father and I do this and he was curious. Could he do it too? He didn't write much – usually just the verse followed by a one-sentence thought and his application in as few words as possible, but did this ever lay a foundation for his life. Today, he eagerly takes the initiative to share quiet times with his friends.

We never required him to do this; instead, I would occasionally ask him if he'd like to join me. Our shared quiet times sparked some great discussions, but the best part occurred as we grew together. He saw me daily seeking input from Jesus, receiving just what I needed, and my life being transformed in response to the Word. There is power in sharing your spiritual journey. When teaching a new believer how to do this, it helps to meet weekly for several months. This format for having a quiet time can be quickly learned, but the motivation to acquire this daily discipline takes time to develop. It is not enough to merely cite verses on the importance of having a daily quiet time. A new believer needs first-hand experience interacting with the Lord and witnessing the life changing results from living out what He's teaching them. It is their changed life that provides the best motivation!

How many people start exercising daily after just being told it is important and shown once what to do?

### Learning to Apply

Ron read his Bible every day. In fact, he read through the Bible every year. He did this for six years... until the day he left his wife and family to indulge his lust, fulfilling his deepest fantasies. Eventually he ended up divorced and in prison.

Can it be possible to be in the Word daily and it not impact your life?

According to James, the answer is yes! James gives us the picture of a person who looks at himself in a mirror then walks away forgetting what He has seen. He warns, "Do not merely listen to the word and deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22)

## How can you deceive yourself as you read the Bible?

In Matthew 7, Jesus tells the story of two men. Both of them heard the word. Both of them had houses that looked great. Both of them faced a storm. There was one key difference – what they did in response to what they heard. The wise man put into practice what he heard and it laid a solid foundation for his life. The foolish man heard, and did nothing.

Can't you just picture... "I have a quiet time every day. I'm so spiritual." and then boom, down crashes the house! The foolish man may have even had a bigger and better house than the wise man...before the storm! He was deceived into thinking because he spent all that time hearing the Word he was secure.

Applying what you are reading is so vital. But this doesn't come naturally. It takes time to learn how to intentionally do this.

Recently I met with a student and asked what she did for her quiet time. "I usually read a few chapters in the Bible and write down notes about the things that stand out to me." When I asked her how she was doing applying what she was reading she replied, "Not very good. I just never know what to do." Too big a bite can choke you! After we shared a quiet time together where we meditated on one verse she found it much easier to apply. It wasn't anything huge but did it ever impact her life!

A good way to begin is to encourage them to do an application they can accomplish in five minutes within the next 24 hours. Remember, they are learning a new life skill, and a new discipline. You don't tackle a marathon your first time running! As Jesus said in Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing will also be faithful in much." (NAS)

As we get together weekly, she sees how I apply the word to my life. This "picture," along with seeing the results in my life, is helping her learn how to apply what she hears and reads. Granted, this means I have to be diligently applying what I'm reading!

About a year ago I went back through my quiet time notebook to highlight the applications I'd completed. It was very humbling! So in January I got out a new calendar and used each day's box to record my application, checking it off when completed. Each Sunday I would take time to evaluate how wise I'd been the previous week. As a result, I started to complete more of my applications – and have been astounded at the transformation effected in my life.

## Developing the discipline

This past semester I began meeting with three freshmen girls. All of them came from Christian homes and knew about quiet times but they were vague on specifics. Don't assume because someone knows the term that they also know what to do – or are doing it!

After sharing a quiet time, I encouraged them to take what we did and do it daily on their own. All three began intermittently. Each week as we met we camped out in a different Psalm. I would take them to special places in scripture where I knew they could easily find treasure applicable to their lives.

Eventually I started them in Colossians, encouraging them to pick up the next day where we'd left off and start working their way through this book (or another of their own choosing) on their own. Not one of them did this, so I started our next shared quiet time where we'd stopped in this book the previous week. I always begin our times together asking where they are reading in their quiet times. This lets me know how frequently they are having quiet times on their own, and whether they started working through a book sequentially.

After a month, one of the girls started working her way through the book of Mark on her own – and was soon hooked! Until now, Jesus had only been part of the background of her life. Now He took center stage, and it showed. As soon as I learned she was working her way through a book, all three of us began having our weekly quiet time wherever she happened to be. This kept her on track and gave the others a taste of reading sequentially.

Week after week, this student shared how she was experiencing Jesus meeting her where she “just happened” to be. It wasn't long till her application was to have a quiet time every day, “It really is making a difference in my life when I do this! I don't want to miss out!”

As soon as someone understands the format I encourage them to pass this treasure on to another friend. If you really want to learn something, teach it to another person. You don't have to know much, and this method is very easy to reproduce. I encourage them to “do with a friend what you did with me.” There is always much excitement when they return and share what happened. Plus, as they start encouraging others to have quiet times, it keeps spurring them on in their own new-found discipline.

### Wise Use of Time

And the beauty of this method is it doesn't take much time. It can be done in as little as fifteen minutes – just inviting a friend over for coffee in the morning, or in the break room before the day at the office starts, or during lunch at a park.

Recently I was visiting a friend who was struggling to adjust to life with a newborn. Getting up at all hours of the night had demolished her previous schedule. As a result she was spending very little time in the Word. She was exhausted, discouraged, and feeling overwhelmed. But after we shared a quiet time together, there was joy! This was a gift better than any baby gift, advice, or even sympathy I could give her. As she came into the presence of the living God, sitting at his feet listening, it nourished her hungry soul.

And mine too! As we shared the treasure he laid on our hearts, the depth of our sharing became so precious. Even when meeting with old friends, if we take time to dive into the Word together, doing this at the start helps us connect at a heart level and make the most of the rest of our time.

This really is an excellent way to spur friends on, new as well as old, deepening your relationship with God and each other. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus says, “Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.” Can you imagine the joy this must bring Him?

### Enjoying Jesus

Never forget, this is not a discipline to be checked off, but time intended to be enjoyed with the lover of your soul. Don’t just read the word; interact with the author! He is always there, so close and so eager to communicate with you.

This can take place anywhere in His Word, “All scripture is God-breathed and useful” (2 Timothy 3:16). About 15 years ago I decided to put this to the test having daily quiet times as I gradually worked my way through the entire Bible. It took me three years following this format – just reading until a verse stood out to me and stopping to camp there. I was amazed how many times where I was reading “just happened” to be exactly what I needed that day!

Many days I begin with a verse and have no idea why the Lord highlighted it or how it will be useful that day. But when I hear God’s thoughts on it – wow! Does His living Word ever come alive. Each time I experience Him like this I can’t help but draw closer to Him. I feel so loved! What a life-changing communicator He is! Every quiet time, no matter how short or long, should be a shared quiet time with the Lord!

### Passing It On

A friend recently asked me, “My mom wants to start discipling younger women. Do you have any suggestions?” The best advice I can give is to start sharing quiet times with people! It’s the most effective way I know to spur another person on and get them established in their walk with Jesus. It’s not difficult to do. Even if this is all you do that first year, it can change their life!

Ten years ago, Barb Choat went home to be with the Lord, but what she passed on to me continues to impact my life every single day. It is also impacting the lives of many others as I keep passing this treasure on...and they pass the treasure on...! I am so thankful she shared that first quiet time with me!

### Application Helps!

About the third or fourth time sharing a quiet time with someone, I will share the acronym SPECK. This contains five helpful questions for identifying possible applications:

**Sin** = is there are sin I need to confess?

**Promise** = is there a promise I can claim?

**Example** = is there an example I can follow?

**Command** = is there a command from God I need to obey?

**Knowledge** = is there any new knowledge of God I can praise Him for?

After a couple weeks using this tool, I teach them another acronym, "SMART" which helps them take a vague notion of an application and make it transformational.

**Specific** = what exactly are you going to do?

**Measurable** = how will you be able to know when you've done it?

**Accountable** = what are your plans for having someone hold you accountable? (Does this ever help!)

**Realistic** = have you attempted too much or kept it doable?

**Timely** = don't say, "In five years I will..." life change best happens when you're doing something soon In response!

After reading, "in everything give thanks for this is the will of God," a friend shared, "I need to be more thankful." When I asked her what that would look like, she wasn't sure. Going through the SMART checklist helped her further process until she identified a solid application that was very do-able. She decided to write a note to a very difficult person in her life and share what she appreciated about them. Was she ever surprised how it changed her heart, bringing peace after she did this.

Truly it's in the doing that transformation occurs!