

How to have daily talks with God

By Sandy Fairservice

Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ becomes a child of God, and is born into a world-wide family. Good families talk among themselves, and good fathers love their family, talk with them, and provide for their needs. In the Christian family, our heavenly Father likes to talk with us because he loves us. He has a lot to say to us through the Bible, the book that introduced us to his Son, Jesus Christ. And you probably want to talk with the Lord too.

This article is written to help you learn to keep in touch with God every day, not because you will fall out of favour if you don't, but so that you can live your life in harmony with the love and will of God.

A two-way process

Talking with God—praying—is simple. The Holy Spirit, who lives in every believer, helps us to talk to God in our hearts. (Some people speak aloud.) God hears our prayers and we 'hear' God speaking to us as we read what he has written in the Bible. This two way process needs some privacy, and some effort.

Examples in the Bible

Daily talks with God are not just a human idea. Christians follow several examples. One is Jesus. It was his habit to get up before the day started and go to a quiet place to pray (Mark 1:35). One of the writers of the Psalms (prayers and songs) told how he would pray in the morning:

But I cry to you for help, O Lord: in the morning my prayer comes before you.—
Psalm 88:13

All the great Christians throughout the centuries have made it their habit to spend time with God, reading the Bible and praying. Millions do it today. True, some people don't function too well in the morning, and others may be on shift work. So evening is the only possible time for them. But many people do their best to make it in the morning.

Getting practical

If possible, choose a private place for your private appointment with God. This will reduce distractions. It could be in your bedroom, at your study desk, in the kitchen, even out in the car. One woman could find no private place in her busy home, so she sat in her chair and put her apron over her head. How long should you plan to spend? At first, perhaps 10-15 minutes, but as you come daily into the presence of God, you will be amazed how time flies! As well as a Bible, you will need a notebook and pen. You don't want to forget what you discover.

Think about it first

Before you begin your talk with God, sit quietly and consider for a few moments what you are about to do. You are going to approach God Almighty, the Creator of the Universe. But you can approach him confidently because your sins (wrongdoings) have been forgiven and because you are one of his dearly loved children. Some

people then dive straight into praying, but many have found that it's more helpful to begin by reading the Bible, because the Spirit of God has an opportunity to guide your thoughts and your spirit. But what will you read? Because the Bible is a written message from God it's reasonable to read the books of the Bible from start to finish. You could, for example, start at Genesis Chapter One and read it to the end, but if you are a new believer, that might be a little difficult. John's gospel would be easier, because it contains graphic stories about Jesus.

Get the overall picture

So as you begin, ask God, the author of the Bible, to speak to you through it. First, get an overall view of what your chosen part is saying. Ask, 'What is the main thrust of the passage?' If you notice something particularly interesting, mark it in your Bible, or make a note of it in your notebook. Is there something you don't understand? Note that too. Later, you can ask someone about it. Think about what you have read, asking God for understanding, and put down your ideas.

Now speak to God about your discoveries. For example, in John Chapter One you will read:

' . . . to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. . . ' (verse 12). It might strike you how the text shows that receiving and believing are linked. You could recall the events that led up to the point where you committed yourself to Christ for salvation. You could think about how you 'believed' in him, or 'received' him. You could then thank God for things like the sinless life of Christ, his death on the cross for our sins, the Holy Spirit's work in drawing you to Christ, the honour of being adopted as a child of God, and so on.

That's enough to make anyone bow their heart in thanks and worship!

Ask questions as you consider your Bible passage, such as: Who is speaking? What is happening? Where is it happening? Why? Ask yourself, 'Is it relevant to me, either in principle or in practice?' You may also notice some specific commands, such as, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' If the command applies to you, make a note of it, and ask God to help you obey in future, if necessary confessing past sin. Confession is agreeing with God that it is sin, and that you want to have done with it. The Lord forgives and forgets when we confess our sins:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.—1 John 1:9

The more you focus your mind on the Bible, allowing the Holy Spirit to help you understand it and help you to pray, the more you will see things from God's point of view, which is knowing God's mind. The more you obey the more like the Lord Jesus you will become, growing in your new family likeness.

Make specific requests

Now, why not pray for your daily physical needs? Ask God for wisdom to know how to live properly. Pray that God will take in hand those situations that cause you anxiety. Pray for the ability to speak about your new relationship with God when the opportunity arises, and so on. And you could pray for other people too. Some of them probably need to follow Jesus Christ, so you could pray that the Holy Spirit would draw them to Christ.

God has committed himself to answering our requests. Jesus said, 'Ask, and you will receive'—(John 16:24). King David put it this way:

I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.—Psalm 126:1-2

Will you commit yourself to meeting the Lord daily, for as long as you live? If you do, you will draw on the strength, power, and beauty of God, and grow to become like him. You will become strong in faith, stable in life, and see God do great exploits through you.

Some tips for daily talks with God

Use a large-print Bible. It will help you to read every word. Some of the most important words in the Scriptures are small ones, and can be overlooked. Choose a modern translation from the many available, one that you will enjoy and understand. One popular version is the New International Version, known as 'the NIV'.

Some people use part of their time with God to memorise significant verses for inner peace, strength, and to combat Satan. Here are a few important ones: 1 John 5:11,12; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 John 1:9; John 16:24; Proverbs 3:5, 6.

It is better to be completely alone when you spend time with God. The presence of even your dearest friend will inhibit your response to him. If you are used to having a cup of tea or coffee in the morning, go ahead and have one.

Some people 'warm up' by going over their memorised Scripture verses. Others read a Psalm. You might find that as you read the Scriptures, you will find yourself responding in prayer.

Try listening to a Christian music tape to help you get in the mood.

Don't become bogged down over something you don't understand. There is much more that you will understand. The aim of your talks with God is to get to know him, not become a theology professor.

Look back over your notes occasionally. Check to see how the Lord has answered your requests. You may find that you have come to a better understanding of the Bible, and you will see if you have made progress with your attitudes or actions. After a while, you will develop your own pattern of 'feeding' and responding. Modify it as your needs change, for example, more prayer and less reading, or vice-versa, or perhaps more note-taking. This is one case where if it's right for you, it's right.

Will you commit yourself to having daily talks with God for the rest of your life?
