

5 Simple Steps to Spending More Time with God from “Relevant Magazine” by Peter Jones

As believers, we know how important it is to spend time with God. In fact, most of us would probably say that our relationship with Him is a top priority in our life. But how does that look on a day-to-day basis?

It’s easy to *say* God is a priority. It’s a whole different thing to live it out. Have you ever found yourself thinking, “I really need to spend more time with God” but can never seem to find it? Or maybe you have a strong morning routine and a great devotional, but you find yourself slipping right into the busyness of your day, forgetting to be present with God except for those sacred morning mornings. Or maybe you’re just starting to build a habit of meeting regularly with God, but you’re not sure where to start and you’re overwhelmed with how to get there. The good news is this: If you have the *desire* to grow closer to God, you’re already a step on the right path – there are just a few simple steps you can take to turn that desire into a habit.

Why Should We Spend More Intentional Time with God?

Before we break down the 5 steps to building a habit of meeting with God, there is one critical thing to note: The Lord examines our hearts (Jeremiah 17:10). So before you go any further, ask yourself *why* you want to spend time with the Lord. He would much rather have 10 minutes of your uninterrupted, undistracted time and a heart *desperate* for Him, than a full hour of you just being with Him to say you did it and check off another “positive discipline” box.

Think of it this way, why do you spend time with the people you love? Are you going out for lunch or having dinner consistently because you want to make a *habit* of doing so? Of course not. You do it because you love that person and you love spending time with them.

The same goes for our Creator. He created us and He loves us. Our hearts long to be with Him but we're just not great at stopping ourselves to consistently take that time in our insanely busy world.

So are you ready to start spending more intentional time with God? Below, we're going to break down just 5 simple steps to building the habit of meeting with God: Desire, Discipline, Start the Habit, Cultivate, Automaticity.

Step 1: Desire

To begin forming the habit of meeting with God we must have a desire to do so. The first and foremost question you have to ask yourself (and truthfully consider) is: Do you have a hunger for God? John Piper once said, "*The reason we don't read the Bible is because we don't want to read the Bible.*"

Often times when we think of meeting with God or "hearing" from Him, we overcomplicate it. We don't need to be in a perfect form or have the best day full of good deeds to come to Him. We just need to have a desire to be with Him. Don't have that desire? Ask for it. Pray for a hunger for Him. Ask God to help you want Him.

In his book, *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer shares this prayer: *O God, I have tasted Your goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the Triune God, I want to want You; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me Your glory, I pray, so I may know You indeed.* Tell God you want to want Him. Say that you *long for more longing* and that you are desperate for Him. He will honor your prayer.

Step 2: Discipline

Once the desire is established (or if you WANT to have this desire) then it's time to have a little discipline. How do you start to have the discipline to build this habit? Dedicate a time and a place to spend time with God (hint: seize the day by seizing the morning).

In his article, "Seize the Morning," David Mathis had this to say about the greatest habit: *"What we do each morning in the first fifteen to thirty minutes of our day is doubly revealing: it reveals both where our treasures really lie, as well as the trajectory of desires and decisions that will direct the day and, over time, our life."*

Whether you follow this advice or not, discipline will be required to get to the next stage of the habit journey. Maybe you'll have to set your alarm 30 minutes earlier which will require you to get to bed 30 minutes earlier which means you will have to *not* watch that favorite TV show of yours at a particular time at night.

How do we spend time with God? Through prayer, by reading His word, meditation on scripture and worshiping Him (just to name a few!). And we don't want to just spend any, old time with God. We want to really *be* with Him. Being present with God in this way is why we created the Kairos Journal in the first place.

Steps 3 & 4: Start & Cultivate the Habit of Meeting with God

As we're working through this discipline, we'll be simultaneously starting our new habit. If this is totally new to you, you will probably notice something: It takes practice. It's way too easy to start building a habit and then feel immense amounts of shame when we miss a day or skip a time (and why wouldn't the enemy want you to feel this way? Don't give in to it!).

As with most new things we try, they take practice. It takes practice to learn how to ride a bike. It takes practice to learn how to play the piano. It takes practice to develop the habit of setting aside something we used to do in order to do something new. Practice spending 5 minutes in prayer at a certain time and place. Practice reading the Bible five minutes a day. Practice meditating on your verse at noon each day. But don't beat yourself up over being late or missing it entirely.

We promise you this: The habit of meeting with God regularly is worth it. Practicing will help you cultivate that habit. As we continue practicing this process, we'll soon realize it's easier than it was at the beginning. Suddenly it's not so difficult to skip that (bad) TV show. It's not so bad getting to bed earlier (and dare we say we enjoy it?).

As you continue practicing by reading the word at a certain time and place, praying, worshiping or however else you spend time with the Lord, you will soon realize (or not realize really) that you didn't have to "think" so much about doing it. An automatic trigger went off and you just started doing it. This leads us to the last step of building the habit of meeting with God.

Step 5: Automaticity

This is a fun word that essentially means it requires your brain very little effort to do something. Think of MLB pitchers who throw thousand of times per year or NBA players who take foul shots – they have done these things SO MANY TIMES that it requires very little brain effort. It's the same with you driving a car or brushing your teeth before bed.

Officially, automaticity means: *“the ability to do things without occupying the mind with the low-level details required, allowing it to become an automatic response pattern or habit. It is usually the result of learning, repetition, and practice.”*

And it's the same idea behind spending time with God with one BIG difference: While the science behind forming habits may have helped rewire your brain to spend time with God at a certain time and place each day, your heart *longs* to be with Him even more.

Why it's important to Spend More Time with God

Quite simply, the more we spend time with God – in His Word, through prayer and worship – the more of Him we want. We have a habit of meeting with God but it's not a duty. It's not even a discipline and it certainly isn't some God-hack. It's a deep, deep desire to be with Him. Why? Because “the word of God is alive and active” (Hebrews 4:12). Who else or what other book can say that it is “alive and active?”

We have tasted the Lord's goodness. We understand the joy of being with Him. And we can't imagine being without Him. As we understand Him better we realize that we can't nor want to do anything without Him. When conflict arises, we go to Him. When uncertainty at work or in the home pops up, we go to Him...without thinking.

We go to Him because he is our source. Because he is the God of Hope and “fills us with all joy and peace as we trust in Him” (Romans 15:13). We go to Him because he is our Father.

No longer is this a mechanical habit but a way of living – and as Christians, the only way *worth* living.