

A top-down view of a desk with various items. In the top left is a dark blue Bible with 'HOLY' visible on the spine. In the top right is a white cup with a colorful pattern. In the center is a white rectangular box with a gold border containing the title and subtitle. To the right of the box are orange-handled scissors. In the bottom left is a clear tape dispenser with a roll of white tape. In the bottom right are two pencils, one brown and one pink. In the bottom center is a yellow sticky note with the authors' names.

# THE QUIET TIME SCRAPBOOK

IDEAS, EXERCISES, AND RESOURCES  
TO REJUVENATE YOUR TIME WITH GOD  
(PREVIEW EDITION)

*By Dick Wiedenheft  
& Debby Bellingham*

THE QUIET TIME SCRAPBOOK (PREVIEW EDITION)  
Ideas, Exercises, and Resources to Rejuvenate Your Time With God.

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# Read This First

Let's talk about your quiet times (personal devotions, times with God—whatever you call them). How are they going? We (Dick and Debby) have both been having them for years . . . and at times, not having them. They can be problematic in that they are indispensable for a close and growing relationship with God, and yet they are very hard to maintain, especially in today's busy, stressed-out culture. Why is that? For us, there are many reasons. Here are a few of the common ones: we lose inspiration; we get stuck in a rut; what was once life-giving and nourishing comes to feel like a chore. That's where this scrapbook comes in. Sometimes, all we need is a fresh idea or a new creative inspiration to get us going again. Relationships are like that. Even when we are committed to them, they can get stale if we keep doing the same old thing all the time. Some of us are determined to trudge through that read-the-Bible-in-a-year plan we made as a New Year's resolution. But, if the truth is that we've been stuck in Leviticus for five weeks, we may need to give ourselves the freedom to try something different. But what to do? We could wait for a new idea to find us—to show up in our Facebook feed or in Sunday's sermon—but wouldn't it be better to have a whole scrapbook full of options ready at hand? That's what you hold in your hands! However, before you begin to explore and try new ideas, we'd like to share with you a bit of the spiritual wisdom we've gained through our own experience and from our study of Scripture and the lives of godly men and women who have gone before us.

## Grace

First, what is the purpose of spending time with God, anyway? Sara Groves reflects in her song "Know My Heart:" "Why do I pray—do I pray to say I prayed an hour?" The truth is that without even realizing it, we often turn our time with God into a religious work. If we spent a decent amount of time with God to start the day, we feel good about ourselves and anticipate that it's going to be a good day—God will bless us. Or, we judge our time with God based on how it makes us feel. Was it boring? A struggle? Did we catch ourselves nodding off? Then it was a failure. Did the heavens open, and we had a new revelation or a strong, sweet sense of God's love for us? Yay, success! Here's the question: Are we spending time with God for what we get from it—a good feeling or spiritual points with God? If this is so for you (and trust us, you're not alone; it is true of us more often than we care to admit), then we have subtly forgotten that salvation is by grace and not by works. In reality, our relationship with God is based on our faith, our trust, in God's undeserved and unconditional love for us, not on what we can do, earn, or get out of the effort.

So why *do* we spend time with God then? If we are a follower of Jesus Christ, we do it to get to know the God who already loves us. We do it to strengthen and deepen our relationship with the one who is already committed to us. We do it to become more like the one who has already determined that we are God's beloved children who will one day resemble his Son Jesus completely.

We encourage you to use this scrapbook in that spirit—to help you grow in God’s grace, explore God’s love, discover and enjoy God’s goodness. You can’t earn a better relationship with God. You can only take advantage of God’s offer and earnest desire that you have the one he has already purchased for you and committed to give you. Nurture what you’ve been given. Think of the devotional ideas in this book as cups which will better enable you to catch the grace God is already raining down on you.

## Community

We can’t do it alone. We can’t grow a relationship with God all by ourselves. Christianity is a team sport. You can no more follow Jesus by yourself than you can play football or play a symphony by yourself. It is impossible to do it alone without turning it into something other than what it is. Jesus said, “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them” (Matt 18:20). This does not mean he isn’t with us when we’re alone; it’s just that when it comes to living out our faith, he doesn’t expect that we will try to do it on our own.

This scrapbook is meant to help you spend personal time with God. The danger is that you may think spending time alone with God is enough. It is not. To be called into a relationship with God is to be called into a family. We get to know God and grow in God first and foremost in community. It is no accident that the greatest commandment Jesus gave after “Love God” was “Love your neighbor.” We can’t love our neighbor by ourselves any more than we can learn to swing dance alone! God means for us to read his word in community. After all, he has gifted other people with insights and perspectives you don’t have and you with gifts others need. God means for us to pray and worship in community. Others have spiritual gifts to share, testimonies of what God has done for them, needs and hurts, hopes and victories that you don’t have. We need the body of Christ. We can’t grow a mature and healthy Christian life without it. In fact, we can’t grow patient, forgiving, and servant-hearted without other flawed, frail, faltering people in our lives. As Thomas Rhine put it so eloquently, “Difficult people are the faculty of the soul.”

For these reasons, we urge you to use this scrapbook in the context of your relationships with other followers of Jesus. Is your pastor preaching on I Peter? Then use I Peter as the text for some of the Bible-related devotional ideas in this book. Does your church follow a liturgical calendar? Then choose exercises in keeping with the appropriate season of the Christian year. Does your small group share prayer requests? Then include some of those requests in the prayer exercises you find in this book. Or even better, do some of the exercises in this book with others. As we’ll explain below, we have alerted you to those exercises which are easily adaptable for groups.



# Action

Not only is it impossible to follow Jesus alone, it is also impossible to grow spiritually without putting what you've learned into action. Remember the parable Jesus told of two men? One built his house on the sand, the other on the rock. The storm demolished the first house, but the second stood. Here's the key point of the parable: The difference between the two men was not whether they listened to God's word. Both listened! The difference was whether they put what they learned into practice. Similarly, Jesus didn't say, "My food is God's word" but "My food is to *do* the will of him who sent me." That is why John Wimber used to say, "The meat is in the street."<sup>1</sup> Do you want the strength and stability of a life built on solid footing and the nourishment of rich spiritual food? They do not come from our time with God alone, but also from what we do about it afterwards. Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it so well:

"[The world] is the place where we find out whether the Christian's meditation has led him into the unreal . . . , from which I awaken in terror when I return to the world-day world, or whether it has led him into real contact with God, from which he emerges strengthened and purified. Has it transported him for a moment into a spiritual ecstasy that vanishes when everyday life returns or has it lodged the Word of God so securely and deeply in his heart that it holds and fortifies him, impelling him to active love, to obedience, to good works? Only the day can decide."<sup>2</sup>

To include in this scrapbook the many active ways we can live out our faith would require a second volume! Fixing a screen door for the widow next door, visiting the church organist who is in the hospital with pneumonia, giving financially to an economic development ministry, being kind to a family member who is annoying you, sharing your faith with a coworker, washing the dishes for those you live with just begin to scratch the surface. For this reason, we chose to limit the focus of this book to your personal quiet time. However, please don't forget: Just like building strong muscles requires not only supplying them with plenty of protein, but also exercising them strenuously, so your faith and godliness can't grow unless you exercise them. Do not forget that *the meat is in the street*.

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1. John Wimber, Twitter Post, Nov 16, 2015, 10:25am, <http://twitter.com/johnwimber>.

2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (San Francisco: Harper, 1954), 88.

## How to use this book

We have designed this book to be as user-friendly as possible. We realize that the first question you will likely ask is, how much time will this take? Therefore, we have organized the various exercises based on how long they take—a few minutes, twenty minutes or more, part of a day, or a day or more. That being said, the times we have indicated are only guidelines. We all work and process at different speeds, and many of the exercises are flexible and will easily expand to fill more time than we have indicated. What you will often find is that the more time you give them, the better they will be. We hope this scrapbook inspires you to take more time than you intended!



Next, for each exercise, we have given you an introduction—a description of what that exercise is, and in many cases, a rationale for why it is valuable. We have followed that with suggestions for or instructions on how to carry it out. These are intended to get you going quickly. We hope you will not focus too much on doing it right but will just get started trying it. If you do want to gain more insight on any of the exercises in this book, excellent resources exist. So finally, in many cases we have included resources where you can turn for additional insight and direction. Please note that while we believe the resources we have included will prove helpful, we cannot guarantee that everything contained in all of them is in keeping with our beliefs or yours. Please use them with discernment.

Additionally, we have provided a few other features. First, we have indicated on the table of contents and on each page which exercises can be easily adapted for children or groups. Second, we have included space in the table of contents for you to make yourself a note on how each exercise went. As with a family recipe book, you might write “favorite,” “dud,” “needs more time than indicated,” “try again,” etc. You will also find that some of the exercises require advanced planning. Others, you may want to adapt or experiment with. Third, we have included an introductory chapter for those who are brand new to spending time with God. If this does not describe you, feel free to skip it. Finally, we have provided some final thoughts on developing a rule of life. Here is where we hope some of the exercises you try in this book will become a habit. We are using the word “rule” here not in the modern sense of a command or law, but in the old sense of a guide or support. You can think of this rule as a trellis, providing structure and support for the living vine that grows up on it. Think of your spiritual life as that vine and the rule of life as the regular rhythm of spiritual patterns, exercises, and disciplines that help that life grow. The final chapter on crafting a personal rule for your spiritual life will help you construct that trellis.

With that, let us leave you with one final caution. While this scrapbook is laid out like a smorgasbord of plug-and-play options, spiritual growth does not happen in a consumer manner where we try something and discard it for something better if it doesn't give us immediate results. Many of the exercises in this book take time to learn and will take time to do their work in you. There is a sense in which you will need to submit yourself to them for them to have their intended effect. That is really not a surprise, right? Anyone who has learned to play an instrument or a sport or who has gained a skill knows the effort and perseverance involved and the benefit missed by those who give up quickly. That's why the apostle Paul says, “train yourself to be godly” (1 Tim 4:7). By God's grace may this scrapbook help you to that end.



4+ mins.

GROUPS

KIDS

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# Bible Videos

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Do you ever get to the end of the day too frazzled and exhausted to concentrate on anything constructive? All you want to do is flop down in front of the TV and veg out? We've got good news: doing so doesn't have to mean skipping your time with God. Many wonderful Bible videos of various lengths and formats are available these days online, through various streaming services, and on DVD. Bible videos allow you to listen to (and watch!) God's word or to learn about the Scriptures in engaging ways which do not require much energy on your part.



This exercise hardly needs instructions. If there's one thing we're good at today, it's accessing video. Check the resource section below for some of our favorites. Once you've got the video rolling, here's what we'd urge. Put down your other devices and focus on what you're watching. Resist the urge to multitask. As you watch, pay attention to what God is teaching you or stirring in your heart and mind. Take a few minutes when you are done to talk with God about what struck you. You may want to capture your reflections in writing.

## Resources

> **Thebibleproject.com** is a rich resource containing dozens of 4-8 minute videos on each book of the Bible as well as on other biblical themes and topics. The scholarship behind them is strong and insightful and yet the videos are engaging and artfully animated. Get prepared to learn about the Bible and to enjoy doing it!

> InterVarsity Christian Fellowship also has a six-part video series (6-10 min each) giving an overview of the Old Testament story. [2100.intervarsity.org/resource-keyword/old-testament](http://2100.intervarsity.org/resource-keyword/old-testament)

> **The Visual Bible Projects** consist of unabridged, word-for-word dramatizations of Matthew's Gospel, John's Gospel, and the book of Acts. These are widely available on DVD. We suggest you start with Matthew.

> **The Bible App for Kids** reads select Bible portions alongside animated scenes and engages users with fun activities to test and reinforce their knowledge.

> **Pure Flix** and **RightNow Media** are online subscription services that offer many other Christian video selections.

Photo by Sarah Grace Wiedenheft



5+ mins.

GROUPS

KIDS

# Multi-Sensory Reflection



The Bible is full of visible, tangible, touchable reminders of God. From Gideon's fleece and Samuel's ephod stone to the lampstand in the temple and Jesus' basin and towel, multi-sensory worship is everywhere. Adding sight, smell, taste, and texture to your time with God can be memorable and can touch you on a level words may not. It is also often easier for children to engage this way. Be creative. Below are some ideas to get you started.

## Suggestions

- Light a candle in a dark room and meditate on John 8:12 or Matt 5:14-16.
- Put an ice cube over a heat source and ask God to melt the cold/hard places in your heart.
- Wash your hands (or feet) in a basin and reflect on Ps 24:3-6 or Ezek 36:25-27.
- Touch some sandpaper and ask God to make the rough places in your heart, personality, or relationships smooth.
- Mold with clay and remember that God is the potter. Invite him to make of you what he will.
- Plant a seed, and tell God you want your heart to be good soil. Pray that God's word would bear much fruit.
- Hold a large nail and remember the pain Jesus endured for us. Ask him to help you take up your cross as well.
- Burn some incense or light a scented candle and ask that God would receive your prayers as a pleasing aroma.
- Examine a leaf or a flower and notice the intricate patterns, textures, and/or colors. Praise God for his amazing creation.



# Giving Up Something Non-Essential

Thru the day

The value of the spiritual discipline of fasting is not in the doing without, but in the drawing near; intentionally passing up the pleasure of a certain food, pastime, or habit reminds us that God is our true satisfaction and the source of our power. Often a person undertakes a fast with a hoped-for end in mind, such as discerning God's will. The companion of such fasting is prayer, and its duration is for a specified time or season (See the entry on Fasting).

But there is also benefit to be had in fasting just for the sake of it. We can deny ourselves something non-essential as a declaration of our love for Jesus and our desire to know God more intimately.

There was a woman who sensed God was inviting her to give up sugar for 40 days. Her response was, "Seriously God? You know 40 days would include Thanksgiving and Christmas—no pumpkin pie or Mom's Christmas fudge. Are you sure?" But the Spirit's impression was strong, and even though she didn't understand the why, she obeyed the nudge. Every time she was tempted to head into the kitchen to look for something sweet to nibble on, she would hear the Spirit ask, "Which do you want more? A cookie or Jesus?" When the question was put that directly, the answer was obvious. Of course she wanted Jesus more than a cookie; she told him so and asked for grace to love him more.

There's nothing wrong with eating a cookie, but letting it go for the sake of love promotes an increase of faith and trust.

St Theresè entered the cloistered convent in Lisieux, France at the age of 15. She died at the age of 24.



Photo by Sarah Grace Wiedenheft

Theresè was sickly from an early age. She knew she'd never have health and energy to do great deeds and works of service for the Lord she loved. She wondered how she could show him how much she loved him. God gave her a way. It was in keeping with her humble spirit and within her capacity to accomplish.

"Love proves itself by deeds, so how am I to show my love? Great deeds are forbidden me. The only way I can prove my love is by scattering flowers and these flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance, every word, and the doing of the least action for the sake of love."

She took every chance given her to sacrifice, no matter how small it seemed. Especially if it could be done without anyone's awareness, little deeds done in secret, known only to God.

She smiled at sisters she didn't like; she ate everything without complaining; she kept quiet when her extroverted temperament urged her to speak up. Each of these self-denials she offered to Jesus as proof of her love. In the language of her time, she called these actions "mortifications." She couldn't do great deeds, but dying to her own inclinations was a deed she could do for love.

These sacrifices were the flowers she offered Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

You can also offer such flowers to Jesus.

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in the ways you can fast from neutral items or habits. Unless you have to tell someone, keep your fast a secret between you and God.

## Resources

*The Story of a Soul* by St. Theresè of Lisieux is her autobiography in which she poetically expresses her love of Jesus and how, even though sickly, she could serve him in great ways.

5. Debby Bellingham, *The Eternal Now* (booklet); available at [www.thementoredlife.com](http://www.thementoredlife.com). Debby also facilitates a retreat by the same name.



# Jesus Prayer

“Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” the Jesus Prayer, is one of Christianity’s oldest and most efficient prayers. Versions of this prayer have been used throughout the centuries to aid people in praying unceasingly, as we are instructed to do in 1 Thess 5:17. It is found on the lips of the blind man outside Jericho, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me,” and on the heart of the tax collector who “would not even look up to heaven,” saying, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

It begins with Jesus, and not just his name, but his whole person as revealed in glory as Lord and Savior. And what do we ask of him? Mercy, for we are sinners. We don’t beg for forgiveness—that is already accomplished—but for mercy to aid us in our weakness. Frederica Mathewes-Green says, “The problem is not in God’s willingness to have mercy, but in our forgetting that we need it.”<sup>7</sup> When we forget that we stand under the shower of God’s mercy, pride sneaks into the room and humility goes out the window. We pray the Jesus prayer to constantly remind ourselves that God is the one who does the saving. Here is how to pray it:

## Instructions

Begin with a commitment to repeat the prayer for a specific amount of time, say 15 minutes. When your mind wanders, return to the phrase. Stay present to the prayer; it is not a “meditation or reflection;” it is a straightforward request to Jesus.

There is no magic in the words; the point of the prayer is not found in its repetition, but in its ability to connect you with Jesus (Matt 6:7).

Continue praying the prayer internally throughout the day. Whenever your mind is idle, return to the prayer. Attempt to let it run through your heart and mind like that song you can’t get out of your head.

After the prayer has settled into your heart, you may want to begin the prayer in the normal way, “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me . . .” and then let the Holy Spirit specifically fill in the blank about the way you need Jesus’ mercy right now. “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, *I’m jealous, or I’m angry, or I’m greedy, or I’m confused, or I’m nervous.*” You get the idea. It makes your prayer life quite dynamic and current.

## Resources

- *The Way of the Pilgrim* (various translations) is the story of a mendicant pilgrim which teaches the practice of the Jesus Prayer.

- *The Jesus Prayer* by John Michael Talbot is a meditation on each of the words of the Jesus Prayer.

- *The Illumined Heart* by Frederica Mathewes-Green is an introduction to Orthodox Christianity with a chapter on praying the Jesus Prayer.

- [Orthodoxprayer.org](http://Orthodoxprayer.org) offers articles about Orthodox Christianity and particular helps with the Jesus Prayer, also known as the prayer of the heart.



# Praying the Psalms

Remember “wax on, wax off” from *The Karate Kid*? This famous movie scene illustrates what every athlete and musician knows: Learning a skill requires breaking it down to its basic parts and repeating those basics until they become second nature. For a guitarist, it’s practicing scales and “riffs.” Once you master them, you are free to improvise, with your hands automatically using these basic parts to create something new and wonderful. Did you know that the same principle applies to prayer? The Psalms provide us with the basic prayers that, as we master them, will give us attitudes, phrases, and subject matter to include in our prayers. Read the prayers of Jonah (Jonah 2), Mary (Luke 1:46-55), and Jesus (Matt 27:46, Luke 23:46)—they are full of lines from the Psalms! You could call the Psalms a school of prayer. Enrolling in this school is easy (but staying in will require perseverance!). To start, just read a Psalm and trying to make it your own prayer as best you can. As you begin, here are some insights to help you along.



## Insights

- Psalms 1 and 2 orient us. Psalm 1 teaches us that the Psalms are the prayers of those seeking to walk in God’s ways and that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. Psalm 2 adds that the Psalms are the prayers of those who give their allegiance to God’s king (Jesus!) whose kingdom will prevail in the end.
- No sooner do we get to Psalm 3 than we realize that life is a lot more complicated than the first two psalms made it seem! We also learn that it is okay to complain about this. In fact, the Psalms teach us how to complain to God about the trials of life with faith (as opposed to grumbling in unbelief). The Psalms give us words to express our pain, fear, sorrow, distress, and anger toward God and others. They teach us to be *honest* as we pray.
- Most of the Psalms are addressed to the LORD. When Lord is written with small caps, it is a translation of the Hebrew *Yahweh*, the covenant name of God. This name reminds us that God has promised to be there with his people to protect and provide for us. It is an invitation to relationship! It is also the reason that the Psalmists complain so bitterly when the LORD seems to be far off and that they ask him to answer with such bold, expectant faith.



- The Psalms are, by and large, the prayers of Israel's kings—those charged with working out God's will among his people. Because of their representative role, these kings take the brunt of the opposition from God's enemies and the bulk of the responsibility to see God's will done. David was the first great king, and Jesus is the last and greatest. As Jesus' followers, we enter into his kingdom work, and thus into his prayer life, by learning to pray along with him. Try to pray the Psalms to Jesus, with Jesus, and for Jesus sake!

- When you can't relate to the specific experiences of a Psalmist, try to relate to the emotions he's feeling. If you can't personally relate to the emotions, pray on behalf of someone else who can.

- Are your emotions and struggles quite unlike those of the Psalmists? If so, ask God why this is. Are you living by faith and seeking first God's kingdom like they are? If not, turn the Psalms into a prayer that your heart may be shaped and transformed.

- As you pray through the Psalms, notice how they move you from lament to praise, with many starts and stops along the way. This structuring reflects our heart's circuitous journey as we live the life of faith and mature in God!



## *Resources*

*Answering God* by Eugene Peterson is a wonderful book which will teach you more about praying the Psalms.

*Reflections on the Psalms* by C.S. Lewis also gives many great insights about the Psalms.



# Solitude

2+ hrs.

Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus are among those who retreated to isolated places to be alone with God and to hear his voice more clearly. Away from the influences, demands, distractions, and temptations of the world, they regained perspective and were able to re-focus their hearts on God's will. Solitude can do the same for us.



Solitude involves getting away from people, tasks and responsibilities, distractions and entertainment to be alone with God. Ideally, we will remain in our place of solitude beyond the time when the noise level inside of us subsides and we can hear the quiet. If we don't have that much time, we may have to settle for whatever "alone time" we can get. The process of being alone can be painful and scary. Many of us are attached to and dependent upon our busyness, responsibilities, and interests to give us meaning and identity and to distract us from the deeper and darker realities which may be lurking within. However, when all that is stripped away, God offers us an incredible gift—to meet us in the truth of who we really are and to give us himself in place of all else. In the quiet of solitude, we become available to God and how he may want to meet us. We can not control what happens, but we can choose to show up and make ourselves available. We will want to approach our time of solitude as if we are responding to the Lord's invitation: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song 2:13, KJV).

## Resources

Ruth Haley Barton, *Invitation to Silence and Solitude*.

Ruth Haley Barton's *Sacred Rhythms*. and Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*. both have chapters on Solitude.



**Do you ever struggle** with your personal devotions (a.k.a. quiet times), family devotions, or small group worship times? Maybe you don't know what to do. Maybe they have become dry or uninspiring. This scrapbook is here to help breathe new life into your time with God. It is chock full of fresh and creative ideas to reenergize and refresh personal or group devotions. From the brand new Christian and young child to the life-long saint, there are ideas and exercises for every level of experience with God. Co-written by a pastor and a spiritual director/retreat leader, it provides practical wisdom and resources as well as deep spiritual insight. From classical spiritual disciplines to the latest creative ideas, here are just a sampling of the 52 entries found inside:

- imaginative prayer
- writing a psalm (or poem to God)
- Bible videos
- art prayer
- multi-sensory reflection
- breath prayer
- contemplating creation
- serving somebody
- journaling
- solitude
- listening to Scripture

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