

Seeking the Lord in the Morning

Abby Van Solkema

What is the first thing that you reach for in the morning? Do you immediately pick up your phone to check social media? Do you look at your work or school emails and start thinking about all the tasks you need to complete? Do you grab your running shoes and head out for some exercise? Or do you press the snooze button to get twenty more minutes of sleep?

If any of those descriptions sound like you, I'd like to suggest something different to reach for when you first wake up—your Bible. While prayer and Bible study are certainly beneficial at any time of the day, it is especially important to set aside time for communion with God first thing in the morning. There is no better way to start your day than with a few moments of quiet reflection and fellowship with the Lord. In the Psalms, we see that David recognized the value of seeking God in the morning. In Mark 1 we read of Jesus himself going to a quiet place early in the morning to pray. And in Luke 10 Jesus teaches us by his words to Mary and Martha that we need to sit at his feet before we rush off to accomplish our tasks for the day.

Sleep provides much needed refreshment for our bodies, but our souls are nourished by the word of God and prayer. When we start out our day by meeting with God and meditating on his word, he will give us the strength that we need to face whatever comes our way; the strength to put on the armor of God and pick up that sword of the Spirit right away in the morning, ready to do battle. We will receive wisdom and guidance from the word of God about how we are to conduct ourselves and make decisions on a daily basis. And the peace that comes from spending time in fellowship with your heavenly Father carries over into all aspects of your day. It will have a positive effect not only on your relationship with God, but also your relationships with others. I know from experience that I am a far more patient wife and mother when I have taken the time to start my morning with Bible study and prayer.

What we reach for first shows our true priorities. It's not wrong to check our phones, answer emails, or work out in the morning. But if we make time for those things and not for our personal devotions, then they have become idols. So push those activities back a few minutes and start off your day by thinking about spiritual things instead of earthly things, even if it means getting up a little earlier. And if you are a lover of the snooze button, you are probably thinking, "I'm not a morning person! I can't get up early!" Why can't you wake up earlier? Is it because you're staying up too late at night reading, watching Netflix, or scrolling through social media? Do you procrastinate on homework and need to stay up all night to finish at the last minute? Do you have too much to drink and it makes it difficult for you to get out of bed in the morning? Be honest with yourself.

Young people, now is the time to establish good habits! It is very easy to convince ourselves that we are just too busy right now, and that we will make spiritual things a priority as soon as this ends or that happens. But one busy season inevitably leads to another. If you think you have too much going on right now with work, school, and relationships, I can assure you that life isn't going to get any less hectic once you are older and Lord willing, get married and start a family. We cannot live our lives apart from God. Choosing not to spend time in the word and prayer is essentially saying to the Lord, "I don't need you. I can do this myself." That is a terrifyingly arrogant thought.

It is only because of Jesus' death on the cross that we are privileged to have access to our heavenly Father. What an amazing opportunity! Are you excited about that? We should all be jumping out of bed in the morning, eager to take advantage of it. Once you get in the habit of spending quiet time with God in the morning, you really start to look forward to and treasure those few moments of peace and spiritual nourishment. And with a little practice, waking up early in the morning gets easier too.

Whether it is about rescheduling our mornings or committing to waking up a few minutes earlier, we need to be disciplined and reliant on God's grace in order to spend consistent, quality time with him. Christ reminds us in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the

same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” Before you fall asleep tonight, pray that God will help you to start your day tomorrow by giving your first thoughts to him.

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