

LESSON EIGHT

Creative Ways To Spend Time With God

by Amy Meyer Allen

“Then [Jesus] said to all, “Anyone who wants to follow Me must put aside his own desires and conveniences and carry his cross with him every day and keep close to Me!” ~ Luke 9:23 TLB

In our fast-paced world there are many things that vie for our attention. We become so caught up in the busyness of life that we yearn for ways to unwind, to shut our minds off and just “veg out.” Unfortunately we often choose the wrong things (like Facebook, television, texting, video games, drugs or alcohol) thinking they will help when in fact they leave us feeling more empty and restless because our deepest needs and longings are left unfulfilled.

Each one of us is created with a longing for intimacy—we want to know that we are loved for who we are, not what we do. The only one who can know every little thing about us and still love us is the Lord, because He created us. He longs to spend time with us and calls to us as He did to Adam and Eve after they had sinned in the garden: “Where are you?”

Spending time with God should not be a “have to” but a “get to.” And it certainly shouldn’t be boring—far from it! There are plenty of ways to spend creative quiet time with the Lord using the gifts and abilities He has given you. If you like to write, create poems or songs or prayers to God or simply pour out your heart through words. If you like to draw or take photographs, create images that remind you of certain passages of the Bible. If you are more analytical, study certain aspects of the Bible that fascinate you—whether it is the genealogy of Christ or the historical background of parables. Time with God doesn’t look the same for every person since we are each unique. And it doesn’t have to be regimented, but it should be regular. The more time you invest in your relationship with the Lord, the more you will get out of it.

Jesus promises to give us rivers of Living Water, while the world can only offer stagnant, muddy pools. Drink from the pools and you will get sick, emaciated and still be desperately thirsty. Drink from the flowing, fresh water of the Word that Jesus offers and you will always come away feeling refreshed, invigorated and with an abundance that naturally overflows onto those around you.

I can’t wait for you to dig into this study and maybe see time spent with God differently than you ever have before. The teaching next week will also introduce creative and fun ways to draw closer to the Lord. Enjoy your time with Jesus this week. As you will see from Mary’s story, time spent with Him is needed and never wasted. And with all the choices we have in this world of how to spend our time, Jesus says when we choose to be with Him, we have chosen the “better thing.”

DAY ONE

Wrestling With God

Read Genesis 32:1-32

1. Who was Jacob preparing to meet and why was he so nervous?
2. What was Jacob's prayer to God?
3. What promise had God made to Jacob?
4. Who did Jacob wrestle with?
5. What was the result?

BRING IT HOME:

1. The word wrestle can mean grapple or come to terms with something. In this sense, have you ever wrestled with God? Over what?
2. Jacob came away from his wrestling match with God with a limp, but he was also blessed by God. If you wrestled with God over something in what way did He change you and also bless you?
3. If you have never wrestled with God over an important issue in your life, or a difficult decision that needs to be made or perhaps an upcoming encounter with someone that is making you fearful, do you think this passage gives you permission to do so? Why or why not?

Write out a prayer to God in your journal. If there is something in your life you are struggling with, wrestle it out with God. He wants us to be real with Him. He can handle our questions, our doubts, our anger and fear. He is able to both change us and bless us through the encounter.

DAY TWO

Alone Time With God

1. Read Mark 1:29-39. What was Jesus busy doing?
What did Jesus do very early in the morning?
Who was looking for Him?
2. Read Matthew 14:1-24. What did Jesus do when He heard about John the Baptist's death?
Who followed Him and what happened next?
What did Jesus do after feeding the five thousand?
3. Read Luke 6:6-16. What did Jesus do on the Sabbath?
How long did Jesus spend praying to God?
What did He do the next morning?
4. Read Luke 22: 39-45 and Luke 21:37. How often did Jesus visit the Mount of Olives?
Did He pray alone? What did He pray for? How earnestly did He pray?

BRING IT HOME:

1. Does it feel like everyone and everything is clamoring for your attention? Do you think Jesus understands? What do you think He would tell you to do?
2. Why do you think Jesus prayed alone? Do you think He set an example for you? Why?
3. What was happening before all these recorded times of Jesus praying? Do you think it is even more important to find time to spend with God during times of great stress or pouring yourself out in ministry?
4. What do we know Jesus prayed for on the Mount of Olives? How is this an example for us?
5. Using Jesus as your example, what are some of the things that came from His time spent alone with God and how can you apply this to your own life?

In your journal talk to God about the time you spend with Him. Pour out your heart. If you are longing to spend more time with Him, ask Him to help you carve out time for Him each day. Ask Him to help you align your will to His. One of my favorite quotes is from the C12 Group, a Christian accountability community: "Priorities are what we do. Everything else is just talk!" Is God a priority in your life?

DAY THREE

Creative Time With God

Read Luke 1:26-56

1. What did the angel tell Mary?
2. How do we know how God feels about Mary?
3. Did Mary believe what God said through the angel?
4. Who did Mary visit and how long did she stay?
5. What did Elizabeth say to Mary when she first arrived?
6. How did Mary respond?

BRING IT HOME:

1. Mary was still a teenager when she became pregnant with Jesus. There was even greater social stigma and oppression surrounding an unwed pregnant teenager in those days. Where do you think Mary found her strength?
2. The journey from Mary's home to Elizabeth's in the hill country was about 90 miles and would have taken Mary between 4 - 10 days either by foot or on a donkey. This gave her time to think about and compose the beautiful song/poem she wrote to God. Have you ever written a poem, story, or song about God or to Him?
3. Mary's song reveals her extensive knowledge of Jewish history and Hebrew scripture. She referred to 12 different Old Testament prayers in her song. Mary truly knew God and His Word. How about you? Have you hidden God's Word in your heart? What do you draw from when unexpected difficulties arise in your life? Think about this quote by Paul E. Miller who wrote the book "A Praying Life": "As I saturate my life with the Word, I give the Spirit a vocabulary to personalize the Word to me." How much do you truly know God's Word?

In your journal, write a poem, song or prayer to God. Try using the same parts as Mary did in hers:

- 1) confess your understanding of who God is and who you are in comparison to Him.
- 2) describe what God is like, name some of His attributes
- 3) marvel at His intimate concern for the details of your life and
- 4) reflect on God's promises. You may want to find an image that goes along with your poem.

DAY FOUR

Listening To Jesus

1. Read Luke 10:38-42. What was Mary doing in this passage?

What did Jesus say to Martha when she complained that Mary wasn't helping her?

2. Read John 11:17-37. What did Mary do when she heard that Jesus had come?

What did she say to Him?

3. Read John 12:1-9. What did Mary do for Jesus?

How much was this perfume worth?

What did Jesus say to Judas when he accused Mary of being wasteful?

BRING IT HOME:

1. Have you ever really stopped to listen to what Jesus has to say to you?

2. Life is busy. There is always plenty on our "to do" lists. Have you ever thought of your quiet time with the Lord as needed?

3. How desperate are you to spend time with Jesus?

4. Time in our day and age is a precious commodity. How much of your precious time are you willing to give the Lord? Do you think this is being wasteful?

Write a prayer to Jesus in your journal. Tell Him how much He means to you. Now stop and listen to what He has to tell you. Write down what He says. His Words will always line up with Scripture and never be condemning.

DAY FIVE

Reflecting God's Glory

1. Read Exodus 33:7-11. What was the "tent of meeting?"

How did the Lord speak to Moses?

2. Read Exodus 34:27-28. How many days and nights was Moses with the Lord?

What did he do during this time?

3. Read Exodus 34:29-35. What happened to Moses' face because he had spoken to the Lord?

BRING IT HOME:

1. Do you have a "tent of meeting" - a special place where you go to meet with the Lord? Mine is in my closet. If you don't have one, consider setting apart a cozy place in your home where you can keep your Bible and journal and other supplies handy. It can become a refuge. Record any ideas that come to mind concerning this space.

2. Do you believe that God wants to speak to you as His friend? Jesus said as much in John 15:15. How does this make you feel?

3. Reflect on the important relationships in your life. Is it true you grow closer to one another, the more time you spend together? Is this true in your relationship with Jesus?

4. Moses' face was radiant after speaking with God. Does your countenance reflect to others the glory of the Lord? Why or why not?

Write out a prayer to God in your journal. Talk to Him about anything that is on your heart from this entire lesson. Like Mary, choose the "better thing" and it won't be taken from you!