

What's Wrong With Using Other Books for My Devotions?

Some people say, "I do my daily devotions, but I read 'My Utmost for His Highest' or 'Our Daily Bread'. What's wrong with using books like these? Aren't they based on the Bible?" To that we say, "There is only one book in the universe God promised to inspire; it's not by J. Oswald Chambers, and I'll bet Chambers himself wouldn't find any argument with that statement! The only book the Lord has pledged to inspire is the one that Paul, in Ephesians 6, calls the sword of the Spirit.

Of course, this is not an either/or thing—it's a both/and! But first and foremost, you need to go directly to the Word itself for God-breathed instruction. That's what inspiration means: "God-breathed."

The Bible has stood the test of time. Other volumes may be classics that remain popular for a hundred years or even a thousand. The Bible has endured from the start, and its end will never come. We simply have to get back to the Bible.

But What If I Just Don't Have the Time?

Sometimes even though we know reading the Bible is important, we don't think we have the time to do it regularly. So many things are happening in our lives—we are just too busy! We'd like to feast on God's Word, but when will we have the time? Here's what we say to that: "We will always have time for the things we see as important and enjoyable."

If we think facebook is important, we find time to facebook. We might feel tired on Sunday morning, in no mood to attend a church service—but if a friend invites us to party, we'll find the energy.

Because we always have time for the things we enjoy and consider important, what does it say to us if we claim we simply can't find forty minutes a day to spend alone with God?

How Long Does the Journaling Time Take?

We have implemented a 20/20/20 method. That's twenty minutes for reading, followed by twenty minutes for journaling, and then, in a group setting, twenty minutes to share together what we've written in our journals. The whole small group takes, on the average, one hour. If you're doing devotions alone, this same equation works, except for the sharing portion. Then you can complete your devotions in forty minutes.

Where Can We Obtain a Journal?

Buy a journal or a notebook on any stationery store.

What If I Don't Have the Money to Buy a Journal?

We don't have a problem with spending money. We do it every day. We spend the equivalent of a journal for one meal in a fast-food restaurant.

Investing in your growth in Christ is the greatest investment you can make. When you think about it, many of us spend more on McDonald or a movie ticket than we do on what may bring eternal dividends! Don't get duped by the myth that something like spiritual growth should cost you nothing.

The person who doesn't buy a journal in order to save money is like a person who unplugs the clock to save time.

Learn to invest in your personal growth with Christ. There is no higher venture.



We always have time for the things we enjoy and consider important.



Life Journal

Time with God

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS On S.O.A.P Journaling



Too Much Reading!

Some people might feel, in following the Life Journal reading program, that there are just too many chapters to cover. For those who are unaccustomed to reading, it may appear to be true.

Here are three ways to resolve that perceived problem:

1. Read just half of what is presented.

A chapter a day can be a minimum.

2. Use the Beginner's Guide on Bible Reading.

It offers less amount of reading without losing the flow.

3. Read until the Holy Spirit reveals a gem of wisdom.

As you read, you will come upon a verse that stands out. Stop there. Journal on that verse. It will contain an amount of wisdom you will need for something you will be facing later on in life.

What If I Miss A Day... or Three?

There will be times that you will miss a day (or a few days) of reading. You are fearful of beginning again because you will have to "catch up!"

Don't try to catch up. Start on today's reading. Whatever day it is, start there. Don't try to rewind the tape and catch up all the days you missed. That will discourage anybody! Start with today. Don't worry. You'll come around to it next year. Or if you have a day off, go back and read one or two that you missed. But don't get discouraged. Get back on the bus and discover what God has for you today!

But I Don't Understand!

Some people say, "What if I don't understand 90% of what I am reading?" Then don't journal on the 90% you don't understand. Journal on the 10% you do! Begin there. If you will be faithful to journal on what you do understand, God will reveal more to you next time around.

Be faithful with what God shows you. This year, you may understand 10%, and if you are faithful to journal and apply that, next year, you will understand 30%. Then the next year, 50%, and then 90% the following year! Stay faithful and don't let your lack of understanding decide how we will live your life. Choose the best for your life. It will last you the long haul!

Why Should I Journal?

Some people say, "I read the Bible, but I don't journal. Should I journal?"... "Yes."... "Why?"

Well, partly because in the book of Deuteronomy, God required Israel's kings to write out all of His Word in their own handwriting, then read, every day, what they had written. He mandated this practice, He says, so that the hearts of the kings might not be lifted up above their fellowman and would not become prideful.

If God made this a daily requirement of Israel's kings, then it's not too much to ask of the King's kids. Regular, prayerful time in the Bible keeps our hearts from straying.

How about other reasons? For one thing, journaling will help you when the tests come—and they *will*.

The more you learn to write, the better your communication will be. You become better able to take tangled thoughts and articulate them. You develop the ability to compose your feelings and ideas in an effective and powerful way. When you're called upon to stand and speak, you'll be able to communicate more effectively because you've learned to write. The regular practice of journaling will be a tremendous help in developing your *communication skills*.

Why Is It So Important to Do Devotions Every Day?

What would the people in our church look like if they snacked on very little food morsels during the week and ate only one good meal on the weekend? Answer: You'd find yourself surrounded by malnourished people. And how would these undernourished believers fare against a demonic adversary? Can you imagine how this army would look? You'd see skeletons with hollow cheeks and sunken eye-sockets, lined up like phantoms. Weakened by famine, they couldn't even stand at attention; each would struggle to find the strength to keep his or her bony frame upright.



Could this "army" conquer an opposing force? No way. No earthly general would send them out to fight.

Well, then, how about the army of the Lord? What of those who gather on Sunday mornings? Are they spiritually nourished to fight the battles ahead? Considering what most members of God's army subsist on—an occasional tidy snack from a devotional book and perhaps an average-sized meal on Sundays to satiate conscience—you'd have to conclude that God's fighting force has some serious training to do.

Have you ever wondered why marriages seemingly crumble overnight, and—out of the blue—Christians leaders fall to luring temptations?

The truth is, no marriage instantly disintegrates, and no one suddenly falls away from Christ. For that matter, no one dies from an eating disorder after missing a day or two of meals.

It could better be described as a *slow decline*—gradual spiritual starvation, barely even discernible to the outside observer. The malnourishment of God's people happens over time, as they eat less and less. Then, in their weakness, they do something that shocks everyone, finally revealing what was really going on in their spiritual lives.

Did you know that more than 80 percent of those who call themselves Christians read their Bibles *only once a week*? And that's usually on Sundays, at church. They come to church to get their spiritual fill, and then snack on devotional tidbits for the rest of the week (if even that).

We wish for just one day God would change the way our eyes work, so we would see ourselves spiritually. We'd see most local churches filled with skeletal, hollow-eyed saints, looking as if a gust of wind would blow them away like tumbleweeds.

Which is why, when something happens in our lives and we are pushed further away from God, we simply don't have the strength.

So what's the solution? We need a spiritual self-feeding everyday with the Bread of Life.

If we eat only once a week, it's no wonder the church is weak and struggling. But daily fresh bread can change all of that. Regularly dining on fresh bread makes for a stalwart, strong, developed army—the only kind of force that will always make a difference in this world.

Which Bible Translation Should I Use?

You'll find a number of good paraphrases—*The Living Bible*, *The Message*, or *Good News for Modern Man*—that seek to take the Bible's message and translate it into English idea for idea (rather than word for word). The late Ken Taylor created *The Living Bible* when he wanted a version his grandchildren could understand. At that time there were very few English translations available. Taylor's work was like a breath of fresh air. A newer translation called the *New Living Translation* builds on and fine-tunes his work. Most users think it's excellent.

Other versions try to translate more word for word than idea for idea: some of the popular ones include the *New American Standard Bible*, the *King James Version*, and the *New King James Version*. Somewhere in the middle is a translation like the *New International Version* (which has been the top-selling English Bible for many years). The NIV reads at about an 8th-grade level, using vocabulary, phraseology, grammar, and syntax most English speaking people can easily understand.

Choose whichever translation fits best for you. Whatever you choose, get to know this book! Get to know it with all your heart. Choose to regularly sit at the Lord's feet and listen to His Word.

I've Heard That the King James Version Is the Only Anointed English Translation of the Bible. Is This True?

No. There are many wonderful versions and paraphrases of the Bible. In broad terms, a version has been translated, word for word, from the Bible's original languages. A paraphrase is taken from a version and is presented "idea for idea."

Among the various versions, the *New International* is very well-loved. Most people read at around an 8th-grade level. The relatively easy to understand NIV has positioned itself into that category. *The New King James Version* is listed at 9th-grade level to 11th-grade level. These are more accurate on the verb tenses but sometimes a bit harder to read.

The King James is rated at a 12th-grade level. It was not in print until 1611, and Paul the apostle was beheaded in Rome around AD 66, so obviously he didn't use it. He also didn't read English but rather Greek, Hebrew, & Aramaic.

Among the paraphrases, several are excellent, including *The Message* and *Good News for Modern Man*. As you begin, you may find one more suitable to your style than another. A brand-new believer may settle on a paraphrase at first, then move to a translation later.

Regardless, the bottom line is that you read the Bible!